

Happy Holidays



On Top Of The News Email: news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel:+297 582-7800 Friday, December 14, 2012



HAT-TRICK!

British Prime Minister David Cameron, left, laughs as he speaks with from right, Finland's Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen, Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Estonia's Prime Minister Andrus Ansip during a round table meeting at an EU summit in Brussels on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. In one whirlwind morning, the European Union nations agreed on the foundation of a fully-fledged banking union and Greece's euro partners approved billions of euros in bailout loans that will prevent the nation from going bankrupt.

(AP Photo/Geert Vanden Wijngaert)

DON MELVIN
SARAH DiLORENZO
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Finally, it has been a good week for Europe. After months of bitter debate, European Union

countries finally reached two crucial agreements Thursday:

They found a compromise to create a single supervisor for their banks — a major step toward lessening the

damage struggling lenders can inflict on government finances — and agreed to give Greece desperately needed bailout funds. As if that weren't enough, earlier on in the week, Eu-

ropean leaders also accepted the Nobel Peace Prize — an award that was in equal measure recognition of the peace the union had forged on the once war-torn continent and in-

centive to solve its intractable financial and political crises.

Continued on next Page



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EU scores hat-trick with Greek, bank deals, Nobel

Continued from front

So upbeat was the mood in Brussels that European Council President Herman Van Rompuy even dared to say the end of the crisis might be at hand.

"The worst is now behind us," he told European leaders gathered for a summit Thursday to discuss how to build a closer union.

"But of course much still needs to be done," he added.

The measures, approved by European finance ministers, ended months of haggling over ways to deal with the three-year financial crisis caused by too much government debt. First, finance ministers from the 27 EU countries negotiated through the night to agree to give the European Central Bank oversight of their banks. That is a key component of what many hope will eventu-

ally become a full-fledged banking union — a single rulebook for all banks and coordinated plans for helping lenders in trouble. Crucially, the single super-

visor paves the way for Europe's bailout fund to give money directly to struggling banks, without dragging governments into the mess.



Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, second left, speaks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, left, and French President Francois Hollande, third left, during a round table meeting at an EU summit in Brussels on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012.

(AP Photo/Geert Vanden Wijngaert)

Then, the 17 EU countries that use the euro waved through a total of €49.1 billion (\$64 billion) in bailout funds for Greece, €34.3 billion of which will be disbursed in the coming days. The funds are vital because Greece needs the money to stay afloat and avoid a calamitous default. But the deal is also important for the other 16 countries because disagreement over how to handle Greece had raised fears that a default would bring down the entire currency union.

"The door appears to have been shut on this for now at least," said Craig Erlam, a market analyst with Alpari. Dealing with the connection between banks and government debt — a toxic loop that has forced several countries to ask for bailouts after they tried to rescue their banks — also addresses a major cause of the region's financial crisis.

"The crisis came by way of the banks and now a tool is in place so that nothing will be like it was before," declared French President Francois Hollande on his way into Thursday's summit.

However, serious challenges remain: The economy across the eurozone is in recession; unemployment is rising; and in recent days, industrial production and retail sales have fallen further than forecast.

And while leaders have reached a couple of significant agreements this week, there are still some tough problems to crack. They still have to agree how to wind down bankrupt banks and save others that are struggling.

And they also have to find a way to match the powers they're planning to give bureaucrats at the EU with democratic accountability. □

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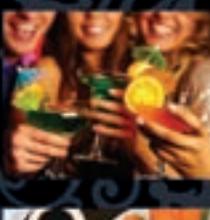
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CASINO AND SHOPS

Rice withdraws as secretary of state candidate

BEN FELLER

JULIE PACE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Susan Rice, the embattled U.N. ambassador, abruptly withdrew from consideration to be the next secretary of state on Thursday after a bitter, weeklong standoff with Republican senators who declared they would fight to defeat her nomination. The reluctant announcement makes Sen. John Kerry the likely choice to be the nation's next top diplomat when Hillary Rodham Clinton departs soon. Rice withdrew when it became clear her political troubles were not going away, and support inside the White House for her potential nomination had been waning in recent days, administration officials said. Rice had become the face of the bungled administration account of what happened

in Benghazi, Libya, on Sept. 11, 2012 when four Americans, including the U.S. ambassador to Libya, were killed in what is now known to have been a terrorist attack. In another major part of the upcoming Cabinet shake-up for President Barack Obama's second term, former Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel now is seen as the front-runner to be defense secretary, with official word expected as soon as next week.

Obama had been weighing whether a Rice nomination would be worth the fight. He accepted her withdrawal with a shot at Republicans.

"While I deeply regret the unfair and misleading attacks on Susan Rice in recent weeks, her decision demonstrates the strength of her character," he said. If Obama taps Kerry for State, the president will create a potential problem

for Democrats by opening a Senate seat — one that recently defeated Republican Sen. Scott Brown is eyeing. Brown had been elected as Massachusetts' other senator in January

2010 after Democrat Ted Kennedy died, stunning the political world as he took the seat held by Kennedy for decades. Brown lost that seat in the November election to Democrat Elizabeth Warren.

Obama had defiantly declared he would choose her for secretary of state regardless of the political criticism, if he wanted, but such a choice could have depleted him of capital and gotten his second term off to a turbulent start with Congress. Already, Rice's withdrawal underscored Obama's difficulty in pursuing his next agenda in a time of divided and divisive government.

Rice withdrew her name in a letter to Obama — and in a media rollout aimed at upholding her reputation. She said she was convinced the confirmation process would be "lengthy, disruptive and costly — to you and to our most pressing national and international priorities."

In an interview with NBC News, she said her withdrawal "was the best thing for our country." □



UN Ambassador Susan Rice on Capitol Hill in Washington. Rice has withdrawn from consideration for secretary of state.

(AP Photo/ Evan Vucci)

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Obama, top Republican meet on 'fiscal cliff'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama and the top Republican in Congress met at the White House late Thursday but there was no immediate indication of progress in the standoff over the looming "fiscal cliff" of tax increases and deep spending cuts that could trigger another economic recession. With 18 days left before a deadline for averting the cliff, Obama and House Speaker John Boehner met for about an hour. They made no public comments following the sit-down, their second face-to-face meeting of the week. The meeting came shortly after Boehner publicly accused Obama of dragging out negotiations on an agreement needed to

avoid automatic across-the-board tax hikes and spending cuts scheduled to take effect at year's end. Other Republicans say such a tactic seems to be work-

ing when it comes to a deal forcing up tax rates for the wealthy.

The two sides appear far apart on the issue, and Boehner is scheduled to

return home to Ohio on Friday.

Hours before the meeting, Obama told reporters a deal is "still a work in progress," while he walked



House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio points to a chart to emphasize his talking point that government spending complicates the negotiations on avoiding the so-called "fiscal cliff," during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. Boehner is insisting that President Barack Obama wants far more in tax increases than spending reductions and appears willing to walk the economy "right up to the fiscal cliff."

(AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

from the White House to a staff holiday party nearby. Asked about Boehner's assertion that he was waiting to hear more from the president, Obama said only, "Merry Christmas."

Boehner told reporters before the meeting that the president continued to stall on Republican demands for spending cuts as part of any deal that includes raising taxes on the wealthy.

"It's clear that the president's just not serious about cutting spending," Boehner said. "He wants far more in tax hikes than in spending cuts." He said that's why there's been no deal.

But there's increasing resignation within the Repub-

lican Party that Obama is going to prevail on the rate issue since the alternative is to allow taxes on all workers to go way up when tax cuts implemented during George W. Bush presidency expire on Dec. 31.

"I think it's time to end debate on rates," said Republican Sen. Richard Burr. "It's exactly what both parties are for. We're for extending the middle-class rates. We can debate the upper-end rates and what they are when we get into tax reform." Beyond the disagreement over tax rates, there is a deep philosophical disagreement on government spending, especially so-called entitlement programs like the Medicare health insurance program for older Americans and the Social Security pension program. Republicans want big cuts, and Democrats don't.

Dick Durbin, a key Obama ally in the Senate, said Thursday that he has been told that increasing the eligibility age of Medicare from 65 to 67 is "no longer one of the items being considered by the White House." In negotiations between Boehner and Obama more than a year ago, it was widely believed that Obama had been ready to accept the raising of the eligibility age. Neither side has given much ground, and Boehner's exchange of proposals with Obama seemed to generate more hard feelings than progress. □

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McAfee in Miami after deportation from Guatemala

KELLI KENNEDY
Associated Press

MIAMI BEACH, Florida (AP) — Anti-virus software founder John McAfee said Thursday that U.S. authorities have made no efforts to question him since he arrived in Miami after weeks of evading Belizean authorities who want to ask him about the death of his neighbor.

"Why would they want to question me, about what?" a tired-looking but sharply dressed McAfee told a throng of reporters Thursday from the steps of his South Beach hotel. The multimillionaire was characteristically chatty and seemed to enjoy posing for pictures with tourists and signing autographs. McAfee was deported from Guatemala after sneaking in illegally from Belize, where police want



John McAfee walks out of the Beacon Hotel in Miami Beach on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012 in Miami.

(AP Photo/CM Guerrero)

to question him in connection with the death of a U.S. expatriate who lived near him on an island off Belize's coast. He said he was put on a plane to Miami where he will stay until his two girlfriends, 20-year-old Belizean Samantha Vanegas, and a woman he called "Amy" can join him.

"I had the warmest welcome of my life. The captain patted me on the shoulders and said, 'We're here to help you, sir, please come with us,'" McAfee told a throng of reporters camped outside his hotel Thursday.

The 67-year-old British native said he has no money

and no home in the U.S. and has been getting by on cash that a Canadian friend sent him until his property manager comes to Miami with his cash and credit cards.

If he's reunited with the women, he said he doesn't know where he'll live or how he'll rebuild his life. Over the weekend, he said he would be happy to go to England, noting he has dual citizenship. □

McAfee bristled as reporters repeatedly asked him why he won't answer questions from officials in Belize, denying he was under investigation.

He stressed that he was afraid to answer questions because dozens of officials there stormed his property, killed his dogs, handcuffed him for hours and tried to extort money. He has not been charged with a crime. □

2 sought in Central Park murder

TOM HAYS
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Police on Thursday continued an aggressive manhunt for a gunman and a getaway driver who ambushed and killed a Los Angeles man in densely populated area of midtown Manhattan, saying they're following multiple leads and have searched the victim's home for clues. The push came amid published reports that the New York Police Department had identified the driver. Officials dismissed the reports, saying they consider the driver a possible witness who has run the risk of working with a stone-cold triggerman. The reports, "though erroneous, nevertheless (put) the driver's life in real jeopardy because an accomplished killer may want to eliminate him as a potential witness before he's in police custody," NYPD spokesman Paul Browne said.

Earlier, Commissioner Raymond Kelly also insisted police hadn't identified any suspects in the execution-style slaying of Brandon Lincoln Woodard on a street about a block from Central Park or determined why he was targeted.

"We're not in a position to state a motive," Kelly said following a groundbreaking ceremony at Manhattan College.

Kelly confirmed that police had executed a search warrant at Woodard's California home, but he refused to say if anything useful was found.

Police want to know who lured Woodard to the block where he was ambushed on Monday afternoon.

A security video shows Woodard walking back and forth and looking down at his smartphone moments before his death, suggesting he'd been directed there by text or email.

Other footage shows the gunman walking up behind Woodard and, without a word, pressing the barrel of a pistol to the back of his head. In one fluid motion, the killer fires one round and immediately slips into a rented Lincoln sedan as a getaway driver pulls away. A pedestrian on the sidewalk who witnessed the killing is visible in the video. She summoned police but told them she didn't get a good look at the gunman, who was careful to pull the hood of his jacket over his head. □

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Illinois lawmakers hope to OK gay marriage in Jan.

JOHN O'CONNOR

AP Political Writer

SPRINGFIELD, Illinois (AP) —

Two Illinois lawmakers said Thursday that they will seek to legalize gay marriage when the General Assembly reconvenes early next year and said support for gay marriage has been rapidly gaining speed since President Barack Obama spoke in favor of it earlier this year.

The push by Rep. Greg Harris and Sen. Heather Steans, both Chicago Democrats, comes just 18 months after the state started allowing civil unions for same-sex couples.

The legislators declined to detail the status of roll-call votes in each chamber during a conference call

with reporters. But Harris has previously said he wouldn't bring a bill to the floor without assurances that there are enough votes to pass it. "We're in striking distance of being able to get it done," Steans said.

Harris and Steans played major roles in bringing civil unions for domestic partners to Illinois. Voters in four other states either endorsed gay marriage or repudiated bans on it in the November election.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel calls it a legislative priority. A poll for Southern Illinois University in September found 44 percent of Illinois voters support same-sex marriage, up 10 points from just two years earlier. "It's very straightforward,"



Illinois Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago, speaks with reporters at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield. Emboldened by recent victories at the polls and what they see as rapidly shifting attitudes in favor of gay rights, supporters say Illinois is ready to become the next state to allow same-sex marriage though they acknowledge getting a bill passed isn't a done deal and won't be easy, even with Democratic majorities in Springfield.

(AP Photo/Seth Perlman)

Harris said. "We treat all couples with the same respect and dignity in the eyes of the law and we protect the rights of religious institutions to either consecrate or not consecrate marriages within their faith as they see fit. It's very important that government not involve itself in religion on either side of the issue." However, the Catholic Conference of Illinois op-

poses the measure and a conservative Christian group's lobbyist says he considers passage now to be a bigger stretch than advocates believe.

Stearns soft-pedaled Thursday when asked if the move to propose legislation signaled that supporters predict victory.

"That's a dangerous game, but that's the goal. We really do want to get a bill

to the governor in January" she said.

Nine states currently allow gay marriage. Harris and Steans said an Illinois law, which would take effect July 1, would recognize same-sex marriages from other states, and those who have entered civil unions in Illinois could apply for a marriage license with no fee for the first year.

Generally, legalized marriage for same-sex couples give them greater rights regarding taxes, insurance, freedom from privacy restrictions that heterosexual couples have.

Camilla Taylor, marriage project director for Lambda Legal, which is representing 25 couples in a lawsuit opposing the state's gay-marriage ban, said the announcement Thursday "brought hope to thousands of same-sex couples across Illinois."

"Illinois same-sex couples and their children need the freedom to marry now, and it's encouraging that our elected officials agree," Taylor said.

While backed by prominent Democrats, the issue is not strictly a partisan one. □

Senate takes step toward banning cyberstalking cell phone software

RICHARD LARDNER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A loophole that permits software companies to sell cyberstalking apps that operate secretly on cellphones could soon be closed by Congress.

The software is popular among jealous wives or husbands because it can continuously track the whereabouts of a spouse.

The Senate Judiciary Committee approved a bill Thursday that makes it a crime for companies to make and intentionally operate a stalking app. The legislation also would curb the appeal for such inexpensive and easy-to-use programs by requiring companies to disclose their existence on a target's phone.

Stalking and wiretapping

already are illegal, but there are no provisions in federal law that clearly prohibit businesses from making an app whose primary purpose is to help one person stalk another.

Franken's proposal would extend the criminal and civil liabilities for the improper use of the apps to include the software companies that sell them. □

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Turkey Patriot defenses to be in next month

SLOBODAN LEKIC
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The Patriot air defense missiles being deployed to protect Turkey from spillover from Syria's civil war will become operational at the end of January, officials said Thursday. In addition, NATO will send Turkey special aircraft that can detect missile launches from Syria.

A number of Syrian shells have landed in Turkish territory since the conflict in the Arab state began in March 2011. Turkey has condemned the Syrian regime of President Bashar Assad, supported Syrian rebels, and provided shelter to Syrian refugees, and Ankara is particularly worried that Assad may get desperate enough to use chemical weapons.

NATO foreign ministers endorsed Turkey's request for the Patriots on Nov. 30. The Netherlands, Germany and the United States are the only NATO members that have the advanced PAC-3 model Patriots that Turkey needs to intercept ballistic missiles. Germany and the Netherlands will each provide two batteries of the U.S.-built air defense systems. The U.S. would likely fill any gaps, possibly by sending some from its stocks in Europe. Up to 400 German and 360 Dutch troops will man the batteries, likely from somewhere well inland in Turkey.

In Berlin, German Deputy Foreign Minister Michael Link told lawmakers that current plans call for the missile sites to be stationed at Kahramanmaraş, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Turkey's border with Syria. □

Russia repositioning for Syrian regime's fall

E. A. KENNEDY
Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's most powerful ally and protector, Russia, began positioning itself Thursday for the fall of President Bashar Assad,

part of the territory," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, Moscow's Middle East envoy, said during hearings at a Kremlin advisory body. Still, Bogdanov gave no im-

ilar support. But the rebels have made significant gains in recent weeks, seizing large swaths of territory in the north and expanding their control on the outskirts of the capital, pushing the

desperation. The U.S. and NATO also say Assad's forces have fired Scud missiles at rebel areas.

"We can't confirm details of the missiles, but some of the information indicates they were Scud-type missiles," NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Thursday in Brussels. "In general, I think the regime in Damascus is approaching collapse. I think now it's only a question of time."

Syria denied the Scud allegations. The government also has been careful not to confirm it has chemical weapons, while insisting it would never use such weapons against its own people. Syria is believed to have a formidable arsenal of chemical weapons, including sarin and mustard gas, although the exact dimensions are not known. At Thursday's hearings in Moscow, Bogdanov said the Foreign Ministry is preparing evacuation plans for thousands of its citizens, most of whom are Russian women, married to Syrian men, and their children.

"We are dealing with issues related to the preparation for evacuation," Bogdanov said. "We have mobilization plans. We are finding out where our citizens are." Russia's ties to Syria date back to Assad's father, Hafez, who ruled from 1971 until his death in June 2000. In the last four decades, Russia has sold Syria billions of dollars' worth of weapons. A change in power in Damascus could not only cost Russia lucrative trade deals, but also reduce Russia's political and strategic interests in the Arab world. Those interests include a naval facility at the Syrian port of Tartus — the only naval base Russia has outside the former Soviet Union. □



European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and Russian Ambassador Sergei Yakovlev, attend a dinner at the State Department in Washington. Russia's deputy foreign minister Mikhail Bogdanov said Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012, that President Bashar Assad is losing control over Syria and his opponents may win, the first acknowledgement by Assad's main ally that he faces a likely defeat.

saying for the first time that rebels might overthrow him and preparing to evacuate thousands of Russian citizens from the country. The head of NATO echoed the Russian assessment, saying the Syrian government is near collapse following a nearly two-year conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people and threatened to ignite the Middle East. Assad appears to be running out of options, with insurgents at the gates of the capital and the country fracturing under the weight of a devastating civil war.

"An opposition victory can't be excluded, unfortunately, but it's necessary to look at the facts: There is a trend for the government to progressively lose control over an increasing

mediate signal that Russia would change its pro-Syria stance at the U.N. Security Council, where Moscow has shielded Damascus from world sanctions.

The U.S. commended Russia "for finally waking up to the reality and acknowledging that the regime's days are numbered," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said.

"We call on Russia to work with us ... work with the various stakeholders in Syria to start moving towards a transitional structure, and we would like to have their help in doing that," she added. Russia's acknowledgment that Assad could lose the fight is an embarrassing blow to the regime, which describes the rebels as terrorists sent from abroad with no pop-

(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

fight closer to Assad's seat of power.

The opposition still faces enormous obstacles, however, including the fact that some of its greatest battlefield successes are by extremist groups the West does not want to see running Syria — something that could hamper international support. On Wednesday, the U.S., Europe and their allies recognized the newly reorganized opposition leadership, giving it a stamp of credibility even though it remains to be seen if the new bloc holds much sway with the fighters on the ground. At the same time, the regime has come under fresh condemnation as Western officials raise concerns that Assad might use chemical weapons against rebels in an act of

VP: Chavez recovery favorable after complications

IAN JAMES
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— President Hugo Chavez is recovering favorably despite suffering complications during cancer surgery in Cuba, his vice president said Thursday amid uncertainty over the Venezuelan leader's health crisis and the country's political future.

A day after officials painted a grim picture of Chavez's health, Vice President Nicolas Maduro announced at a political rally that his condition "has evolved from stable to favorable, which supports maintaining the diagnosis of an increasing recuperation." In the latest of a series of reports about the president's delicate condition, Information Minister Ernesto Villegas said Chavez was making a "progressive and favorable" recovery after suffering bleeding from Tuesday's surgery.

"This recovery process, nevertheless, will require a prudent period of time as a consequence of the complexity of the surgery performed," Villegas said.

Dr. Julian Molina, a cancer expert from the Mayo Clinic in the United States, said bleeding is not uncommon when doctors operate in the same place multiple times to remove cancerous tissue, as is the case with Chavez.

The government has been providing regular updates on the president's recovery

following six hours of surgery in a slight easing of the secrecy that has surrounded Chavez's medical treatment since he fell ill last year. No clinical details have been provided, however.

The latest bulletin about

One-man rule has been the glue that has held together Chavez's socialist movement, and he hadn't groomed any clear successor until he announced over the weekend that if cancer cuts short his presidency he wants Maduro

government. National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello, a Chavez confederate in the failed 1992 coup that brought him fame, is thought to wield power within the military. "In politics, everything is possible," said Gus-



Uruguay's President Jose Mujica looks up as he attends a Mass celebrated to pray for the health of Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez in Montevideo, Uruguay, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012.

(AP Photo/Matilde Campodonico)

Chavez's health came as supporters prayed for him at church services and as Venezuelans increasingly acknowledged the potential for political turmoil ahead if the leftist leader is unable to be sworn in for his fourth term early next year—a possibility raised by his government.

to take over. Some Venezuelans believe power struggles may already be brewing within the president's "Chavismo" movement, which includes groups from radical leftists to moderates. Maduro heads a civilian-political wing that is closely aligned with Cuba's communist

tavo Chourio, a bookseller in downtown Caracas. "Maduro doesn't have influence with those in the military. Diosdado has the influence." Chavez was re-elected to another six-year term in October. His allies have expressed hope about the president returning home for his Jan. 10 inauguration, but on

Hamas stages first West Bank march since '07

M. DARAGHMEH
Associated Press

NABLUS, West Bank (AP) —

The Islamic militant group Hamas staged on Thursday its first public demonstration in the West Bank since 2007, illustrating its improving ties with the rival Fatah movement after a five-year rift. The show of force by Hamas reflected the group's popularity in Palestinian society following an eight-day battle against Israel last month and its rising influence as Islamists rise to power across the region. Hamas said about 5,000 supporters of the Islamic militant group took to the streets in Nablus after prayers Thursday. Marchers chanted, "Hamas—you are the guns; we are the bullets," and, "Hamas, fire more rockets on Tel Aviv." Some women held models of the rockets Gaza militants fired at Israeli cities in last month's fighting.

Hamas' influence was also on display in the city of Hebron, where thousands of supporters turned out for the funeral of a teenager killed by Israeli border police officers a day earlier. Hamas members have been subjected to both Israeli and Palestinian crackdowns since the Islamic militant group seized power in the Gaza Strip five years ago, leaving the Palestinians' Western-backed president, Mahmoud Abbas. □

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Karzai says he'll meet with Obama in Washington

ROBERT BURNS

AP National Security Writer

KABUL (AP) — President Hamid Karzai said Thursday he will meet President Barack Obama in Washington next month to discuss a post-war U.S. role in his country, whose fragile security was highlighted hours earlier by a suicide bombing that killed one U.S. troop and two Afghan civilians.

At a news conference with visiting Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Karzai said he and Obama will discuss how many U.S. troops will remain after the Western combat mission ends in December 2014. He said he understands that immunity from Afghan laws for those remaining Americans is of "immense importance" to Washington, but he added that he has his own priorities in negotiating a postwar U.S. role.

"Give us a good army, a good air force and a capability to project Afghan interests in the region," Karzai said, and he would be ready to argue "with ease



US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta walks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, right, at a joint press conference in Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. A suicide bomber killed four people on Dec. 13 outside a US airbase in southern Afghanistan, hours after Defence Secretary Leon Panetta visited, said officials.

(AP Photo)

and with reason" that his country should grant immunity to U.S. troops.

Obama has said the U.S. will not abandon Afghanistan and risk that it might revert to the al-Qaida haven it became in the 1990s after the Taliban came to power. Nor has he indicated what size and scope of post-2014 military mission he thinks is necessary and affordable. The Taliban are a small but resilient force, even after 11 years of fighting a vastly larger U.S.-led international force. They managed to send a dramatic reminder Thursday, claiming credit for the suicide bombing that killed three and wounded 17 near an entrance to Kandahar Air Field, the largest Western base in southern Afghanistan.

Panetta and his traveling party had left the air field about two hours before the attack. The U.S. military did not identify the American who was killed. It said an investigation was under way.

Panetta was at the air field for about three hours, receiving a briefing from U.S. commanders. Panetta also

spoke to about 350 U.S. troops and took questions from them before flying back to Kabul, where he met with Karzai at the presidential palace.

Panetta described the Kandahar attack as further evidence of insurgent brutality.

"This is what they resort to in order to try to continue to stimulate chaos in this country," he said. "They will not be successful."

The Karzai-Obama meeting, which Panetta said would occur during the week of Jan. 7, with no specific date set, also is intended to discuss prospects for establishing a process for pursuing peace with the Taliban.

The main message of Panetta's two-day visit to Afghanistan was one of reassurance to Afghans that they will not be abandoned after 2014. And he made a pitch for patience among Americans tired of war.

"For the first time since 9/11 we have a chance to achieve the mission that we are embarked upon," Panetta said. □

Pentagon warns of higher bomb threat in drawdown

DONNA CASSATA

Associated Press

KABUL(AP) — American and coalition forces in Afghanistan will be more vulnerable to deadly improvised explosive devices as the military draws down troops next year, a senior Pentagon official said Thursday.

Lt. Gen. Michael Barbero described his concerns about what is the top cause of military and civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Pakistan in congressional testimony that also underscored U.S. frustration with Islamabad's efforts to thwart the production of the devices known as IEDs, most of which are fertilizer-based explosives.

IEDs are responsible for more than 60 percent of U.S. troops killed and wounded in

Afghanistan as the war has entered its second decade. Although the number of incidents is down this year, IEDs caused 1,874 American casualties.

Barbero told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee that the drawdown of some 66,000 U.S.

troops next year will make American forces more susceptible to IEDs. He said fewer troops will mean travel on Afghan roads becomes more predictable, raising the possibility of more attacks. In addition, fewer troops will mean less awareness of what's happening in the vicinity.

"IEDs will continue to be the weapon of choice against our forces," Barbero told the panel. □

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Okinawa:

Crime, Osprey add to anger over US bases

YURI KAGEYAMA

Associated Press

OKINAWA, Japan (AP) —

For nearly 70 years, Okinawa has gotten more than its share of America's military — more jets rattling homes, more crimes rattling nerves.

It's the only Japanese island invaded by U.S. land forces during World War II. It endured 27 years under U.S. administration, and it continues to host two-thirds of Japan's U.S. bases.

The 1995 rape of a schoolgirl by two Marines and a sailor spread rage across the island of about 1.4 million. Now another rape and other crimes allegedly by U.S. servicemen have triggered a new wave of anger, though the suspects make up a tiny portion of the 28,000 U.S. troops stationed here.

Some Okinawans get emotional just talking about the stress they feel living in the U.S. military's shadow.

"Everywhere, everyone

who has a daughter is feeling this way," said Tomoharu Nakasone, a father of four daughters, choking back tears.

Nakasone, who runs an

FM radio station, grew up with the bases and thought he was used to the idea, even forgiving a fatal 2009 hit-and-run by a serviceman as a mistake. But he

was outraged by the latest rape — in a parking lot in October — and petrified by a bizarre incident weeks later in which a 13-year-old boy was beaten in his own

home while watching TV, allegedly by a U.S. airman. "Entering someone's home is simply not normal. It is the lowest of human behavior," he said.

There has always been a degree of strain between Okinawans and U.S. troops, but it has grown more pronounced in recent months, not only because of crime but because of safety concerns surrounding the MV-22 Osprey, a U.S. hybrid aircraft with tilting rotors recently brought to the island.

The U.S. troops, mostly Marines and Air Force, are stationed on Okinawa under a bilateral alliance that's the cornerstone of Tokyo's foreign policy.

U.S. Ambassador John Roos and the commander of the U.S. forces in Japan have apologized for the crimes, promised to cooperate with the Japanese police investigations and increased restrictions on troops. □



A local protester walks by a banner against U.S. Marines in Okinawa hung on a fence near a gate of the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma air station in Ginowan, Okinawa, southwestern Japan.

(AP Photo/Junji Kurokawa)

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Europe shrugs at Berlusconi's political ambitions

COLLEEN BARRY
Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi's political ambitions got a huge yawn on Thursday from both the bond markets and his fellow European conservatives, who instead heaped praise on the country's current leader.

Europe has made clear its preference for Mario Monti, whom Berlusconi has in the space of the last week alternately criticized for his economic policies and invited to run under the moderate banner in Italy's upcoming national elections. At a summit of European center-right parties in Brussels attended by both men, political leaders lauded Monti's technocratic government for his deft handling of the Italian economy since Berlusconi resigned in late November 2011, having failed to persuade markets he could come up with convincing reforms.

Europe's major political party of the center right, the European People's Party, "supports Mario Monti and not Silvio Berlusconi," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said at the conference. "European populists appreciate the results



Italy's EPP party member Silvio Berlusconi talks to the media at the end of the European People's Party summit, ahead of the EU summit in Brussels on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012.

(AP Photo/Yves Logge)

achieved by Monti."

Italian elections are expected to be held in February, accelerated by about a month after Berlusconi's backers in Parliament withdrew support for the Monti government and Monti responded by saying he would resign after lawmakers pass the budget, expected by the end of the

year.

Berlusconi has vacillated over whether or not to run for a fourth term as prime minister, announcing on the weekend he would run and then saying on Wednesday he will step aside if Monti decides to run under the moderate banner.

Monti does not formally be-

long to any political party and has not disclosed any future political plans — though he has said he is open to a second term.

European conservatives made pointedly clear they would prefer the euro-friendly Monti remain at the helm. But Berlusconi insisted he did not feel betrayed by the attention Monti was getting.

"Mistrusted? No, I feel embraced, in fact very embraced," Berlusconi told reporters after the summit. Giulio Tremonti, who was

economics minister in Berlusconi governments, criticized European conservatives, saying on Italian private TV La7 that the comments "in an electoral period are unacceptable. We are in a sovereign country and they cannot tell us who to vote for."

Former Premier Lamberto Dini, who ran a technical government in the 1990s, said he found Europe's response in recent days to a possible Berlusconi comeback "a bit undemocratic and excessive." □

Somali rebels: Up to \$8K to kill any Kenyan forces

TOM ODULA
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — An intelligence message intercepted from an al-Qaida-linked Somali militant group shows that the rebels are being offered up to \$8,000 as a reward for killing Kenyan security officers, a Kenyan official said Thursday. The rewards are enough incentive to motivate some youths in the eastern Kenya town of Garissa to carry out attacks against security forces, Garissa County Commissioner Maalim Mohammed said.

Chronic unemployment in Garissa makes the offer

from the al-Shabab Islamist extremists attractive to young men, Mohammed said. Garissa is populated mostly by ethnic Somalis, many of whom are Kenyan citizens. Mohammed said local residents are complicit in recent attacks on Kenyan security forces that have caused the deaths of 10 police officers and four soldiers in northeastern Kenya. An army sergeant on vacation and a civilian were shot dead Sunday in Garissa by gunmen. Mohammed said Sunday's attack could have been perpetrated with help from the locals. "How else would at-

tacker have identified the soldier who was in civilian clothing?" he said.

The assassination-for-pay offer by al-Shabab varies with the security officer's rank, Mohammed said. Kenya has experienced a string of gun and grenade attacks since it sent troops into Somalia to pursue the al-Shabab extremists.

Three Kenyan soldiers who stopped at the army camp in the town on their way to Somalia were killed last month. One woman was shot and hundreds of shops were burned to the ground as the Kenyan army responded to the killings. □

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Egypt vote means fateful choice for troubled nation

HAMZA HENDAWI

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Two days before a constitutional referendum it considered boycotting, Egypt's secular opposition finally launched its "no" campaign Thursday with newspaper and TV ads detailing the argument against the charter drafted by Islamist supporters of President Mohammed Morsi.

The Morsi camp has a simpler message: A "Yes" to the constitution is a yes to Islam. The deadly violence and harsh divisions of recent weeks — combined with the inability of most Egyptians to even com-

prehend the densely written 63-page document — have turned the vote into a stark choice on whether the largest Arab nation takes a serious step toward theocratic rule. "This constitution is supposed to protect the rights of the minorities, but it is written by the majority for the majority," said Haitham Sherdi, a young opposition supporter from Cairo. "If it passes, it will be used to crush the minority until they vanish," he added, referring to Egypt's Christian community.

Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists have been plastering posters across much of the coun-

try urging Egyptians to vote "yes to protecting (Islamic) Sharia (laws)."

The opposition's campaign on TV, in newspapers and in flyers is focused on the slogan "A constitution to divide Egypt." Activists also took to the streets with loudspeakers atop pickup trucks touring Cairo and other cities. The opposition campaign began a day after the National Salvation Front — an umbrella group of opposition parties — announced it was calling on supporters to vote "no" rather than boycott the referendum. The delay reflected divisions within the alliance. Reform leader and



Egyptian youths walk under a poster with Arabic that reads "invalid, the constitution is invalid, the referendum is invalid, the constitution committee is invalid," in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012.

(AP Photo/Nasser Nasser)

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, who was among those initially favoring a boycott, made an emotional appeal to Morsi on Thursday to postpone the vote, warning of "the specter of civil war." He called on his supporters to vote "no" if the referendum goes ahead as sched-

uled.

Jehad el-Haddad, a spokesman for the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party, said it will accept the referendum result regardless of the outcome, but added: "We want to have a constitution in place because it's a pillar of a functioning state. □

Israeli FM charged with breach of trust

JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's powerful foreign minister was charged Thursday with breach of trust for actions that allegedly compromised a criminal investigation into his business dealings, throwing the country's election campaign into disarray just weeks before the vote.

While Avigdor Lieberman was cleared of more serious allegations against him, the indictment sparked immediate calls for the controversial politician to step down.

He declined to do so at a news conference but said he would consult with his

lawyers on what to do next. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also rallied behind his close ally.

Lieberman denied any wrongdoing, calling the investigation against him a witch hunt.

"According to my legal counsel, I do not have to resign," Lieberman told cheering supporters at a campaign rally. "At the end of the day I will make a final decision together with my lawyers."

Lieberman, a native of Moldova, is head of Yisrael Beiteinu, an ultranationalist party that is especially popular with fellow immigrants from the former Soviet Union. □

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LOCAL Aruba TODAY

Cas di Glas fundraising event officially opens!

Cas di Glas is now underway. ``This is the moment,'' sang musical star Jasper Taconis last Wednesday afternoon, raising goosebumps on the skins of the

countless Santa Clauses that were attending the emotional start of the 2012 edition of this fundraising event. ``This is the moment'' rang out mere seconds

before minister Michelle Winklaar locked three heroic deejays inside their 'home away from home', the House of Glass (Cas di Glas) where they are to stay until Sunday evening. ``This is the time!'' Applause sounded as Jen (Caliente), Suhaila (Power FM) and DJ 101 (Cool FM) stepped inside; they will do their utmost to raise as much money as possible for the charity of Cas di Glas 2012, the elderly on the island. A great effort! The locking up of the deejays doubled as the start of Flora's Santa Claus Caminata, a fun, 5K walk. Santas waved to passing Paranda buses filled with tourists, to passing pedestrians and hooting cars. A brisk tempo had the group back at the Palm Beach Plaza Mall in an hour's time, where they enjoyed fruit and a drink and where they could get a taste of the Beach Tennis matches that are played in the evenings. The well-lit court shone like a jewel, attracting much attention from passers-by. Every evening there is live



music of a variety of artists, so everyone: come to Cas di Glas in the Palm Beach Plaza Mall and enjoy!

For updates and more photos, please surf to www.casdiglas.com, www.rexaruba.com or FB. □

Live tonight at Palm Beach Plaza Mall: Levi Silvanie, Mystical Connection, Idyllmist and Biggie Boy!



A great line-up will brighten up Friday evening at Cas di Glas 2012; starting with Inspired Grace (6 – 7 pm), Hot Ones Band (7 – 8), Biggie Boy (8 – 9), Idyllmist (9 – 10), Mystical Connection and up-and-coming star Levi Silvanie from Holland. After the terrific opening on Wednesday and Thursday night with George McCrae, Jasper Taconis and Junior Tecla Cas di Glas is gearing up for a fantastic weekend. Deejays 101, Jen and Suhaila are still going strong inside their house of glass,

broadcasting live 24 hours a day in a rotating schedule. The beach tennis tournament is a great success; many spectators come and watch the action on the sandy court in front of Taste of Belgium Restaurant. Cas di Glas is a fundraising effort for Wit Gele Kruis Aruba, in particular for the elderly of the island. Many sponsors have been very generous, in particular the Palm Beach Plaza Mall, KLM, Divi Resorts, Flora, Cool FM, Caliente, Power FM, Jays Car rental, Power

systems, Purple Entertainment Group, Fusion, Ginger, NOW, Zenitel, Birkenstock, Rouge, Rage, Caribbean Queen, White, Focus, The Boardwalk, Westin Resort, Bucuti Beach Resort, Caribbean Cinemas at Palm Beach Plaza Mall, Fun City, Aruba Bank, all the artists and many more. Hopefully everyone will come together and join forces to support the elderly people on the island. So come to Cas di Glas and donate some money to this good cause. Thank you! □

Caribbean Queen a proud participant in "Cas di Glas" fundraising efforts

PALM BEACH -- In aiding 'Cas di Glas' efforts of raising funds for the health organization of the local White Yellow Cross, Caribbean Queen boutique is a participating member among fellow Palm Beach Plaza merchants. Caribbean Queen, a specialty boutique within The Salamander Group, is pledging a percentage of sales on its fabulous accessories and wearable art pieces during the entire week of the "Cas di Glas", as well as taking other actions to help ensure a significant donation amount is reached at the conclusion of the "Cas di Glas" happening. The Palm Beach Plaza is the site of the high energy event of "Cas di Glas", where popular local DJs spin a variety of tunes as ongoing efforts continue in a pledge drive for the essential work accomplished by the White Yellow Cross. Caribbean Queen is doing its part in donating a percentage of sales of its unique collection of scarves and belts, earrings and bracelets, necklaces and rings, hats and fascinators, and handbags and shoes. In addition to which, its featured Caribbean Queen

artisan of the month, Marian Abath will make a personal appearance at the boutique on Saturday, December 15, 7:30 – 9:00

which find inspiration in the colors of Aruba and in the island's natural environs. On Saturday, she will create glass beads on site at

the White Yellow Cross.

The Salamander Group is also contributing items from the high-end resort wear line from Caribbean Queen's sister boutique, T.H. Palm & Company. These fashion pieces will be featured in the Cas di Glas fashion show that will take place this coming weekend. The Marian Abath collection will be on display for the whole month of December, with each item capable of imparting the "I AM a Caribbean Queen" spirit. Fabulous fashion accessories can also be found in abundance at Caribbean Queen, open daily, Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Sundays and Holidays from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. But for a special treat, take the opportunity for a visit during

the "Cas di Glas" event, and personally meet the Caribbean Queen artisan, Miriam Abath, on Saturday, December 15, between 7:30 and 9 p.m. More information about Caribbean Queen is available through its website: www.Caribbean-Queen.com or through its Caribbean Queen FB page. Caribbean Queen is a participating shop within the Salamander Group's corporate responsibility "Think Global, Act Local" program titled: Tikkun Olam. Along with its contributions provided for the "Cas di Glas" event, Caribbean Queen donates a portion of year-round sales to a selection of invaluable foundations that work for the community as well as in the promotion of the arts. □



p.m. Abath is well-known for her artisan jewelry as well as for her glass objects

the boutique, with 100% of proceeds from the sales of those beads destined for

Beauty On The Beach

Tendresse Tritsch

She is from Hengelo, Holland. This is her first time in Aruba, she is staying with locals for one month. She loves the Beach.

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PALM BEACH - Beach Tennis, the hottest sport on Aruba, is easy to do. How easy is shown during Cas di Glas 2012, a five-day fundraising event for the elderly on the island.

A beach tennis court has been laid out and during the day an ongoing competition called Break the Record will see people of all ages try and play a soft tennis ball across the net as many times as possible. The reward: great dayly prizes and a weekend stay as the overall prize. Participa-

tion is AWG. 5-- or \$ 3.—(of course this goes towards the charity). So come on down and play, play and play.

And please pay attention: there are free beach tennis clinics, held from 5 – 6 pm (for kids) and 6 – 7 (for adults) as well as a tournament. During the late night hours a Round the Clock event is held – everyone plays in a rotating schedule. The late-night players can win a wonderful prize: a sky dive. Just play as many times as possible! □



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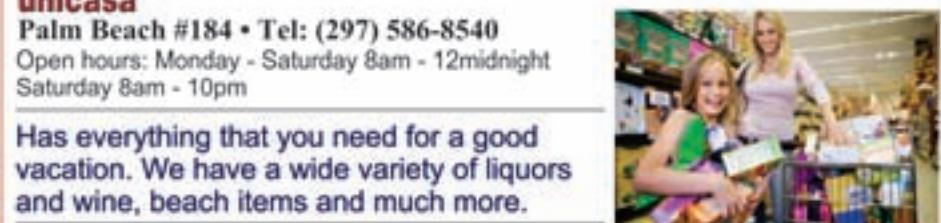
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Renato Zito honored by ATA at the Westin Aruba



PALM BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a very nice gentleman, who is a loyal and friendly visitor of Aruba, at the Aruba Westin Beach Resort, as Distinguished Visitor. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 consecutive years. The honoree was Renato Zito, from Nettuno, Italy. Renato loves Aruba very much, because of the friendly people, the

climate, beaches, tranquility, the safety, and because he feels like he is at home here with a big Aruban family. When Renato visits the Island he stays for months and so he has made a lot of Aruban friends, whom love him dearly, like the people from the Westin Resort. The certificate was presented by Ernest Giel, representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, together with Robert Zara, Convention Service Manager, Richard Roy, GM, and other staff members of the Aruba Westin Beach Resort. □

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"Hats Off to the Man of The Week"!

**MAN
OF
THE
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At the Marriott Ocean Club: Happy loyal visitors honored by Aruba Tourism Authority!



Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a big group of loyal and friendly Visitors of Aruba, at the Marriott Ocean Club, as Distinguished Visitors and Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19, and 20-or-more

consecutive years. The honorees were Carl and Mariam Eastman, Dr. Antoin and Vera Chaker, Donato and Joan Romagnoli, Steve and Elaine Weiner, Herb and Robyn Weiss, Larry and Terri Eisenfeld, Paul and Zelda Schwartz, and Thomas and Stephanie Lesiak. All the honorees have one thing in common, they love the Island very much, because of

the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants and the diversity of the island, and because Aruba feels like a second home where the people are like a family to them.

The certificates were presented by Ernest Giel, representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, together with Gali Sahit and Corey Guest, GM at the Marriott Ocean Club. □



SPORTS

Aruba TODAY



Tom Watson speaks during a news conference in New York, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. The Americans are bringing back Watson as their Ryder Cup captain with hopes of ending two decades of losing in Europe.

Associated Press

**Tom Watson
returns as
U.S. Ryder
Cup captain**

RACHEL COHEN
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Weary of two decades of defeat in Europe, the Americans are breaking from precedent with a captain uniquely suited for the 2014 Ryder Cup in Scotland.

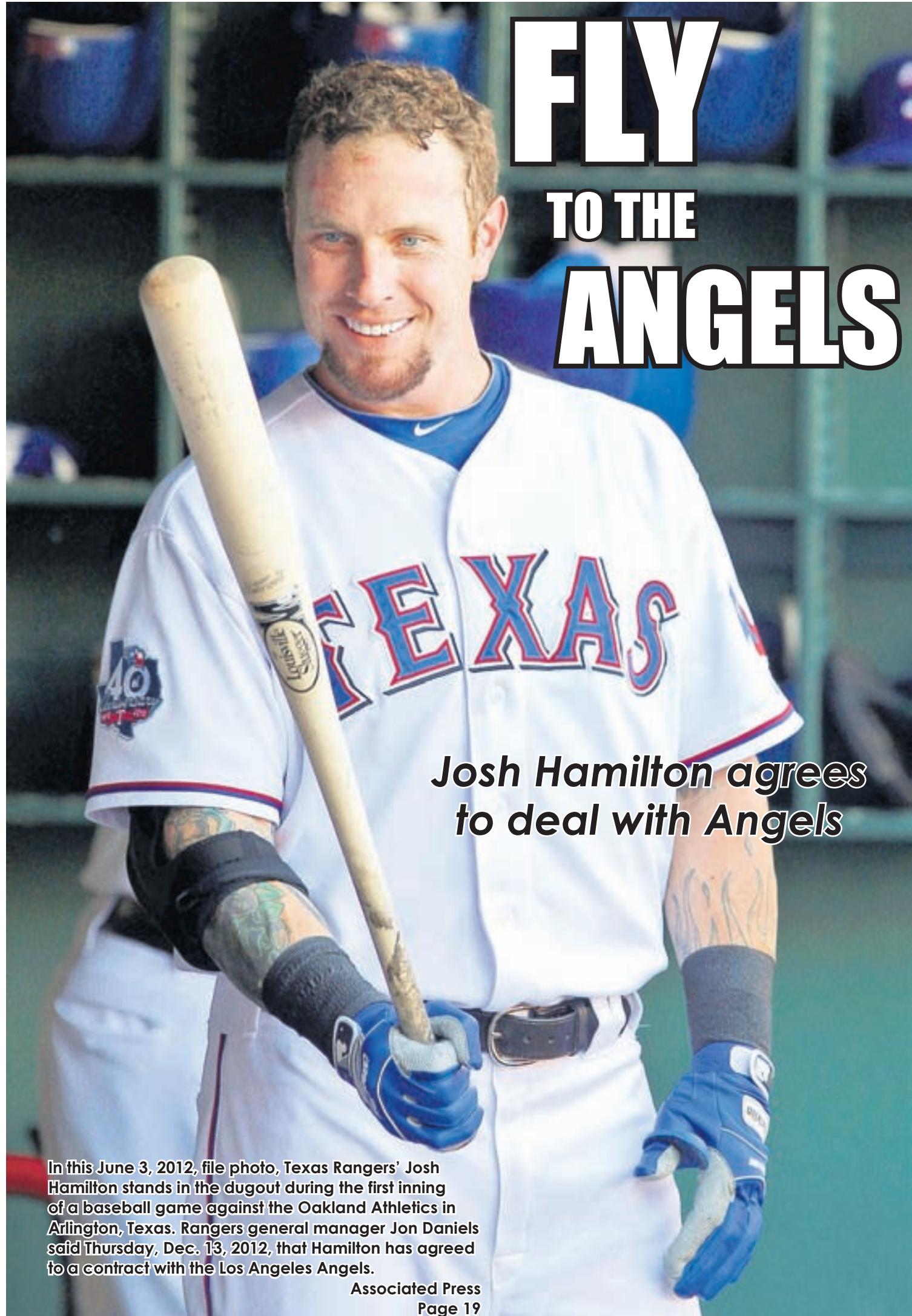
Tom Watson will be by far the oldest man to fill the role and the first repeat captain for the U.S. since 1987. But he's also the last American to lead the team to victory on the road, and he knows how to win in the blustery Scottish weather.

"We are just really tired of losing the Ryder Cup," PGA of America President Ted Bishop said Thursday during a news conference at the Empire State Building.

It won't be easy.

The Americans have lost seven of the last nine Ryder Cups and have not won away from home since 1993, when Watson was the captain at The Belfry in England.

Continued on Page 20





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Hamilton agrees to \$125M, 5-year deal with Angels

By BETH HARRIS
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Josh Hamilton is heading to the Los Angeles Angels, lured with a \$125 million, five-year contract that steps up the migration of high-profile stars to Southern California. The Angels persuaded the free-agent outfielder to leave the Texas Rangers with their third big-money offseason signing in as many years. Hamilton heads to Anaheim after first baseman Albert Pujols came West for \$240 million last December along with pitcher C.J. Wilson - Hamilton's Texas teammate - for \$77.5 million.

Still, the Angels failed to make the playoffs for the third straight year.

They had bulked up their pitching staff earlier in the offseason with the additions of pitchers Joe Blan-



In this Dec. 2, 2012, file photo, Texas Rangers' Josh Hamilton watches his home run with Cleveland Indians catcher Lou Marson during a baseball game in Cleveland. Rangers general manager Jon Daniels said Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012, that Hamilton has agreed to a contract with the Los Angeles Angels.

Associated Press

NHL labor talks wrap up with still no progress

IRA PODELL
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Two days of talks between the NHL, the players' association, and federal mediators still haven't provided any answers how to end the lockout. Representatives from the fighting sides made it into the same room with a federal mediator Thursday. They just didn't make any noticeable progress. After a failed day Wednesday when the parties on either end of the hockey labor dispute never met with each other, lawyers from each group spoke face to face Thursday.

They appear no closer to a deal to save the season.

Players' association special counsel Steve Fehr, who met with league lead counsel Bob Butterman on Thursday, said the sides intend to talk Friday either in person or by phone.

"I expect the mediators will continue to be involved," Fehr wrote in an email to The As-

sociated Press. "Do not want to characterize the discussion today."

At no point on either day this week did union executive director Donald Fehr meet with NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly.

Daly said he expected to talk to Steve Fehr on Friday.

"I'm not sure what the next steps will be," Daly told the AP in an email. "I do expect the mediators to stay involved in terms of monitoring our ongoing negotiations, but at this point there are no further sessions planned. It doesn't appear there was movement by either side on any of the main issues over the last two days."

The league and union hadn't met since talks fell apart a week ago on the third straight day of negotiations in New York. Mediators rejoined the conversation Wednesday following two failed days last month, but still couldn't achieve a breakthrough. □

ton and Tommy Hanson, along with relievers Sean Burnett and Ryan Madson. General manager Jerry Dipoto had said Wednesday that he didn't think a major move was "imminent or required."

But owner Arte Moreno pulled off another coup by getting Hamilton. The 2010 AL MVP, Pujols and AL Rookie of the Year Mike Trout combined for 103 home runs and 316 RBIs last season.

"It's a great day to be an Angel/Angel fan!" Wilson said on his Twitter account. Rangers general manager Jon Daniels said Hamilton had reached a deal with the AL West rival Angels. Two people familiar with the talks disclosed the amount and length of the contract, speaking on condition of anonymity because the agreement was not yet final.

Hamilton's \$25 million average salary matches Philadelphia first baseman Ryan Howard for the second-highest in baseball, trailing only Alex Rodriguez's \$27.5 million average with the New York Yankees.

Since the contract wasn't final, the Angels didn't comment publicly. The team said in a statement, "We continue to look for ways to improve our team. As soon as we have something formal to announce, we will do so."

Moreno and manager Mike Scioscia didn't immediately respond to phone messages.

The Angels allowed free agent outfielder Torii Hunter to sign with Detroit, and he reacted to his former team's latest move on his Twitter account.

"I was told money was tight but I guess the Arte had money hidden under a Mattress. Business is business but don't lie," Hunter wrote.

He followed up with the comment, "Great signing for the Angels. One of the best players in baseball."

Texas had hoped to resign Hamilton, who led the Rangers to consecutive World Series appearances in 2010 and 2011. They made a \$13.3 million qualifying offer at the Nov. 2 deadline, ensuring the team draft-pick compensation if Hamilton signed elsewhere. The Rangers will receive an extra selection immediately following the first round of June's amateur draft. The deal cost the Angels a first-round selection in the draft.

Speaking Thursday after a Rangers' holiday luncheon, Daniels said he had just been informed of the decision by Hamilton's agent, Michael Moye. □

Americans extend gold tally at short-course worlds

ISTANBUL (AP) — Matthew Grevers and Olivia Smoliga won men's and women's 100-meter backstroke and Ryan Lochte anchored a relay victory Thursday at the short-course world championships in Istanbul, raising the U.S. team's leading tally of gold medals to six.

Grevers won in 49.89 seconds, barely defeating Stanislav Donets of Russia, who finished in 49.91 in the next lane. The American won Olympic gold in the same event.

"He is definitely the king of the short course, and I am the king of the long course," Grevers said of Donets. "The underwater skills of the Russian are incredible."

Luckily, I could catch up with the swimming."

Donets said he was "very upset," noting he had posted better times in three races this fall, including at the world cup in Tokyo.

Guilherme Guido of Brazil won bronze in 50.50.

The 18-year-old Smoliga was swimming in her first major international competition as a senior. She took gold in 56.64 seconds, followed by Mie Nielsen of Denmark in 57.07 and Simona Baumrtova of the



Gold medalist Olivia Smoliga of U.S reacts after her victory at the women's 100 meters backstroke final at the FINA Short Course Swimming World Championships at the Sinan Erdem Arena in Istanbul, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012.

Associated Press

Czech Republic in 57.18. Australia's Grace Loh was ahead at the half-way point, but finished fourth.

"It was awesome. I'm so happy to win a world championships," said Smoliga, who flashed a big smile after the race. She said she had warmed up "differently" and was working on her speed. She also talked to Nielsen before the contest.

"She was so nice, it made the ready room relaxing,"

Smoliga said, who failed to qualify for the London Games. Her nails were painted in the U.S. flag's colors of red, white and blue.

In the last race of the night, Lochte established a strong lead for the Americans in the 4x200 freestyle. Teammates Conor Dwyer, Michael Klueh and Matthew McLean maintained control to win gold in 6:51.40. Australia won the silver in 6:52.29 and the Germans

were third in 6:53.22. World record-holder Russia ended in fourth place.

It was Lochte's third gold medal in Istanbul. He won six gold medals and one silver when Dubai hosted the short-course championships in 2010. He won five medals at the London Olympics, including two golds.

Daiya Seto won the 400 individual medley, setting the best time in the heats and then finishing in 3 minutes,

59.15 seconds to win the final. Laszlo Cseh of Hungary came second in 4:00.50 and compatriot David Verrazzo took the bronze in 4:02.87.

The Japanese swimmer built a lead in the breaststroke leg, his strongest discipline, and held on the rest of the way. World record-holder Lochte did not race in the event.

Ruta Meilutyte of Lithuania set a championship record of 29.44 seconds to win gold in the women's 50 breaststroke. Alia Atkinson of Jamaica took silver in 29.67 and Australia's Sarah Katsoulis got the bronze in 29.94. World record-holder Jessica Hardy of the United States was fifth.

"I really didn't expect it," said the 15-year-old Meilutyte, who won the 100 breaststroke at the London Olympics.

"At the moment, it feels just like I have swum a normal race, but it will start sinking in. It's crazy."

Meilutyte said the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro are her next big goal.

Fabio Scozzoli won Italy's first gold medal with a 57.10 time in the 100 breaststroke. He was a silver medalist in that event at the 2010 championships in Dubai. □

Tom Watson

Continued from Page 17

They are coming off a staggering loss this year at Medinah, where Europe strung together a remarkable rally from a 10-6 deficit going into the final day to win by one point.

Watson is the first repeat U.S. captain since Jack Nicklaus in 1987, when the Ryder Cup was played on his home course of Muirfield Village in Ohio. Watson becomes the seventh American to get more than one shot.

"Tom Watson will do a fine job," Nicklaus said. "Tom always has been a wonderful golfer and he remains one, but Tom is also a good leader."

His selection received an immediate endorsement from Tiger Woods. The

Stanford alums have never been particularly close, and Watson has criticized Woods for not showing respect for the game with his demeanor on the course.

"I think he's a really good choice," Woods said in a statement. "Tom knows what it takes to win, and that's our ultimate goal. I hope I have the privilege of joining him on the 2014 United States team."

Watson went out of his way Thursday to praise Woods as "the best player maybe in the history of the game."

"My relationship with Tiger is fine," he said. "Whatever has been said before is water under the bridge. No issues."

Watson breaks the PGA of America's prototype in a big way. The eight-time major champion will be 65 when the Ryder Cup is played at Gleneagles. Sam



Tom Watson leaves the stage after a news conference in New York, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. The Americans are bringing back Watson as their Ryder Cup captain with hopes of ending two decades of losing in Europe.

Associated Press

Snead was 57 when he was captain in 1969, and the oldest European captain was John Jacobs (56) in 1981.

Watson predicted that some would say: "Why is Watson, being the old guy, being the captain?"

"I deflect that very simply by saying: 'We play the same game,'" he said. "I play against these kids at the Masters. I play against them at the British Open." He does hope to play more PGA Tour events in the next two years to spend

more time around his future team.

Watson has not been back to the Ryder Cup since that '93 victory at The Belfry. But since then, he had been pining for another chance to serve as captain.

With that familiar gap-tooth grin, Watson recalled his reaction when the PGA of America first contacted him more than a year ago: "Boy, I've been waiting for this call for a long time."

As much as Watson is beloved around the world for his timeless game, epic duels with Nicklaus and graciousness in any outcome, the Scots consider him one of their own. Watson won his first major at Carnoustie in 1975 when he quickly understood how to play links golf. He won five British Open titles, the most of any American, with four of those in Scotland. □

NBA Capsules

Warriors slip past Heat 97-95

The Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Draymond Green made a layup with 0.9 seconds left to give the streaking Golden State Warriors a 97-95 win over the Miami Heat on Wednesday night.

Klay Thompson tied a season high with 27 points to lead the Warriors, who have won five straight. LeBron James led Miami with 31 points, reaching the 20-point mark for the 25th consecutive game — the longest current streak in the NBA.

Warriors guard Jarrett Jack dribbled the ball at the top of the key as the clock ticked down before finding Green, who caught a quick pass from Jack underneath the basket and made the layup.

James then missed a baseline jumper, sending Miami to only its second loss in 12 home games.

David Lee had 22 points and 13 rebounds, and Jack added 20 points for the Warriors.

Chris Bosh had 21 points and 13 rebounds for Miami, but Dwyane Wade was limited to 14 points on 5-for-11 shooting and had five turnovers.

THUNDER 92, HORNETS 88

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Kevin Durant scored 35 points and Oklahoma City extended its winning streak to nine games with a victory over New Orleans.

The Thunder rallied from an 11-point second-half deficit and matched their longest win streak since the franchise moved from Seattle. At 18-4, the Thunder also matched the second-best start in franchise history. Seattle started 20-2 in the 1993-94 season and the Thunder started 18-4 last season.

Brian Roberts scored 16 points to lead the Hornets, who lost their fifth straight game overall and seventh straight against Oklahoma City.

CLIPPERS 100, BOBCATS 94

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Chris Paul had 19 points and 10 assists to help the Clippers extend their longest win streak in two de-

cades to eighth with a victory over Charlotte.

Blake Griffin and Matt Barnes also scored 19 points for the Clippers, who maintained sole possession of first place in the Pacific Division.

Byron Mullens had 19 points and eight rebounds, and Kemba Walker chipped in with 17 points to lead the stumbling Bobcats, who have lost nine straight since starting the season 7-5. The Bobcats trailed 78-71 entering the fourth quarter and got as close as three before Barnes scored on a fast break dunk and hit a 3-pointer to push the lead back to eight.

NETS 94, RAPTORS 88

TORONTO (AP) — Joe Johnson scored 23 points, and Andray Blatche had 14 points and nine rebounds to help Brooklyn end a five-game losing streak with a win over Toronto.

C.J. Watson scored 16 points and Deron Williams added 12 as the Nets won for the first time since Nov. 30 at Orlando.

Former Raptors Reggie Evans and Kris Humphries both had big games for the Nets. Evans had nine points and 11 rebounds, while Humphries scored 11 points, making nine of 10 free throws.

Ed Davis matched his career high with 24 points and added 12 rebounds, while Jose Calderon had 10 points and 15 assists for

the Raptors, who have lost six straight and 12 of 13.

JAZZ 99, SPURS 96

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Mo Williams hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to help Utah snap San Antonio's winning streak at five.

Paul Millsap led Utah with 24 points and 12 rebounds, Al Jefferson scored 21 points and Gordon Hayward added 19.

The Jazz trailed by eight with a little more than 4 minutes remaining. Williams' winning shot was his only 3 of the night and he finished with eight points on 3-for-9 shooting from the field.

Tim Duncan and Tony Parker each scored 22 points to lead the Spurs, who swept the Jazz out of the playoffs in the first round and had won 11 of the last 12 meetings.

CELTICS 117, MAVERICKS 115, 2OT

BOSTON (AP) — Paul Pierce scored 34 points, including a 3-pointer at the start of the second overtime to give Boston the lead for good, and the Celtics held on to beat Dallas.

Rajon Rondo had 16 points, 15 assists and nine rebounds, and Kevin Garnett added 16 points to help Boston win its second straight.

O.J. Mayo scored 24 points, and Shawn Marion had 16 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists for the Mavericks. □



Draymond Green #23 of the Golden State Warriors makes the game-winning shot against Shane Battier #31 of the Miami Heat on December 12, 2012 at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida.

Associated Press

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Compensation Unclear in suit with pharmacy

KRISTIN M. HALL

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —

Dennis O'Brien rubs his head as he details ailments triggered by the fungal meningitis he developed after a series of steroid shots in his neck: nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, blurred vision, exhaustion and trouble with his speech and attention.

He estimates the disease has cost him and his wife thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket expenses and her lost wages, including time spent on 6-hour round trip weekly visits to the hospital. They've filed a lawsuit seeking \$4 million in damages from the Massachusetts pharmacy that supplied the steroid injections, but it could take years for them to get any money back and they may never get enough to cover their expenses. The same is true for dozens of others who have sued the New England Compounding Center.

"I don't have a life anymore. My life is a meningitis life," the 59-year-old former school teacher said, adding that he's grateful he survived.

His is one of at least 50 federal lawsuits in nine states that have been filed against NECC, and more are being filed in state courts every day. More than 500 people have gotten sick after receiving injections prepared by the pharmacy.

The lawsuits allege that NECC negligently produced a defective and dangerous product and seek millions to repay families for the death of spouses, physically painful recoveries, lost wages and mental and emotional suffering. Thirty-seven people have died in the outbreak.

"The truth is the chance of recovering damages from NECC is extremely low," said John Day, a Nashville attorney who represents several patients who have been sickened by fungal meningitis. □

Study:

People worldwide living longer, but sicker

MARIA CHENG

AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) —

Nearly everywhere around the world, people are living longer and fewer children are dying. But increasingly,

toll, the research said. High blood pressure has become the leading health risk worldwide, followed by smoking and alcohol. "The biggest contributor to the global health burden

from surveys, censuses and past studies. They used statistical modeling to fill in the gaps for countries with little information. The series was mainly paid for by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

diabetes is a bigger killer in Africa than in Western Europe (8.8 deaths versus 1 death per 100,000).

— Central and Southeast Asia have the highest rates of fatal stroke in young adults at about 15 cases per 100,000 deaths. In North America, the rate is about 3 per 100,000.

Globally, heart disease and stroke remain the top killers. Reflecting an older population, lung cancer moved to the 5th cause of death globally, while other cancers including those of the liver, stomach and colon are also in the top 20. AIDS jumped from the 35th cause of death in 1990 to the sixth leading cause two decades later.

While chronic diseases are killing more people nearly everywhere, the overall trend is the opposite in Africa, where illnesses like AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are still major threats. And experts warn again shifting too much of the focus away from those ailments.

"It's the nature of infectious disease epidemics that if you turn away from them, they will crop right back up," said Jennifer Cohn, a medical coordinator at Doctors Without Borders.

Still, she acknowledged the need to address the surge of other health problems across Africa. Cohn said the agency was considering ways to treat things like heart disease and diabetes. "The way we treat HIV could be a good model for chronic care," she said.

Others said more concrete information is needed before making any big changes to public health policies. "We have to take this data with some grains of salt," said Sandy Cairncross, an epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

He said the information in some of the Lancet research was too thin and didn't fully consider all the relevant health risk factors. "We're getting a better picture, but it's still incomplete," he said. □



An overweight person eats in London. Nearly everywhere around the world, people are living longer and fewer children are dying. But more and more the world is grappling with the diseases and disabilities of modern life, according to the most expansive global look so far at life expectancy and the biggest health threats nation by nation.

(AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth)

people are grappling with the diseases and disabilities of modern life, according to the most expansive global look so far at life expectancy and the biggest health threats.

The last comprehensive study was in 1990 and the top health problem then was the death of children under 5 — more than 10 million each year. Since then, campaigns to vaccinate kids against diseases like polio and measles have reduced the number of children dying to about 7 million.

Malnutrition was once the main health threat for children. Now, everywhere except Africa, they are much more likely to overeat than to starve.

With more children surviving, chronic illnesses and disabilities that strike later in life are taking a bigger

isn't premature (deaths), but chronic diseases, injuries, mental health conditions and all the bone and joint diseases," said one of the study leaders, Christopher Murray, director of the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington.

In developed countries, such conditions now account for more than half of the health problems, fueled by an aging population. While life expectancy is climbing nearly everywhere, so too are the number of years people will live with things like vision or hearing loss and mental health issues like depression.

The research appears in seven papers published online Thursday by the journal Lancet. More than 480 researchers in 50 countries gathered data up to 2010

As in 1990, Japan topped the life expectancy list in 2010, with 79 for men and 86 for women. In the U.S. that year, life expectancy for men was 76 and for women, 81.

The research found wide variations in what's killing people around the world. Some of the most striking findings highlighted by the researchers: — Homicide is the No. 3 killer of men in Latin America; it ranks 20th worldwide. In the U.S., it is the 21st cause of death in men, and in Western Europe, 57th.

— While suicide ranks globally as the 21st leading killer, it is as high as the ninth top cause of death in women across Asia's "suicide belt," from India to China. Suicide ranks 14th in North America and 15th in Western Europe.

— In people aged 15-49,

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Google Maps app rockets up iTunes store list

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Google Maps have found their way back to the iPhone, and the new alternative was already the top-ranking free app in Apple's iTunes store Thursday.

The world's most popular online mapping system returned late Wednesday with the release of the Google Maps' iPhone app. The release comes nearly three months after Apple Inc. replaced Google Maps as the device's built-in navigation system and inserted its own maps into the latest version of its mobile operating system.

By noon Thursday in the U.S., users had chimed in with more than 10,000 reviews of the Google app. Nearly 90 percent gave Google maps a five-star rating — the highest possible grade. Despite the quickly rising popularity, Google's solution still wasn't listed among the 18 recommended mapping apps in iTunes as of early Thursday afternoon.

Apple didn't respond to a request for comment about Google's new apps, but it approved the technology before its release.

Apple's maps application proved to be far inferior to Google's, turning what was supposed to be a setback for Google into a vindication.

The product's shoddiness prompted Apple CEO Tim Cook to issue a rare public apology and recommend that iPhone owners consider using Google maps through a mobile Web browser or seek other alternatives until his company could fix the problems. Cook also replaced the executive in charge of Apple's mobile operating sys-

tem after the company's maps became a subject of widespread ridicule.

Among other things, Apple's maps misplaced landmarks, overlooked towns and sometimes got people horribly lost. In a particularly egregious example flagged this week, Australian police derided Apple's

lar feature on the iPhone app — while making it available for smartphones running on its own Android software — is believed to be one of the reasons Apple decided to develop its own technology. The friction that has developed between Google and Apple as they jostle for leader-



This image made available by google, shows the new Google Maps application, on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012.

Associated Press

maps as "life-threatening" because the system was steering people looking for the city of Mildura into a sweltering, remote desert 44 miles (71 kilometers) from the desired destination.

Google Inc., by contrast, is hailing its new iPhone app as a major improvement from the one evicted by Apple.

"We started from scratch," said Daniel Graf, mobile director of Google Maps. Google engineers started working on the new app before Apple's Sept. 19 ouster, Graf said, though he declined to be more specific.

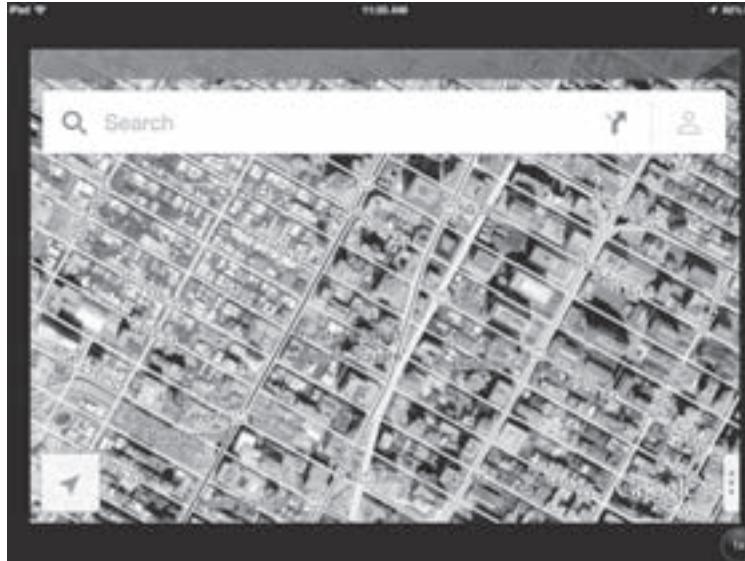
The additional tools in the free iPhone mapping app include turn-by-turn directions. Google's previous refusal to include that popu-

ship in the increasingly important smartphone market also played a role in the mapping switch.

Google's new iPhone mapping app also will offer its street-level photography of local neighborhoods for the first time on Apple's mobile operating system, as well as three-dimensional views, public transit directions and listings for more than 80 million businesses around the world.

The iPhone app still lacks some of the mapping features available on Android-powered phones, such as directions in malls and other buildings.

There still isn't a Google mapping app for Apple's top-selling tablet computer, the iPad, but the company plans to make one eventually. Google, which



is based in Mountain View, California, declined to say when it hopes to release an iPad mapping app. For now, iPad owners can

use the maps in an iPhone mode. That won't be the best experience, but it still may be better than Apple's maps on the iPad. □



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Stocks sink as investors watch Washington

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks sank most of the day Thursday after more signs of tension emerged in federal budget talks. They recovered some of the loss after a late report that President Barack Obama and the House speaker would meet.

The Dow Jones industrial average finished down 74.73 points, or 0.6 percent, to 13,170.72.

House Speaker John Boehner, speaking to reporters in Washington before noon, said that the White House was so resistant to cutting government spending that it risked pushing the country off the "fiscal cliff."

The "cliff" is tax increases and government spending cuts that take effect Jan. 1 unless Congress and the White House reach a deal to avert them. Economists have warned that the tax increases and spending cuts could eventually lead to a recession.

Shortly after Boehner spoke, Obama told reporters that a deal was "still a work in progress." Asked about Boehner's assertion that he was waiting to hear more from the president, Obama said only, "Merry Christmas."

The Dow drifted lower all day and was down 98 points at its low, just after 3 p.m. (2000 GMT). Then the Obama administration said that the president and Boehner would meet

later Thursday at the White House.

Stocks still finished in the red. The Standard & Poor's 500 index dropped 9.03 points, or 0.6 percent, to 1,419.45. It was the first loss for the S&P in six days, tying its longest winning streak since early August.

The Nasdaq composite in-

ples stocks were down only slightly. All 10 categories of stock in the S&P 500 index finished lower.

Best Buy shot up \$1.94, or 16 percent, to \$14.12 after a newspaper reported that the founder of the troubled electronics chain will make a bid of up to \$6 billion for the company by the end of

super-low interest rates to an improvement in the unemployment rate, but the rally faded.

The Fed said it would hold interest rates super-low until the unemployment rate drops below 6.5 percent, a threshold the Fed believes may not be breached until the end of 2015. The rate is 7.7 percent today.

The Dow's close Wednesday of 13,245 put it within a point of its close on Election Day. After the election, stocks slid 5 percent as investors began to fret about the "fiscal cliff," but stocks have drifted back higher recently.

"I don't think anyone expected the markets to hold up this well as we get closer and closer to the deadline," said Randy Frederick, managing director of active trading and derivatives for Charles Schwab in Austin, Texas.

"Two possibilities: Either the markets are convinced that they'll reach some sort of agreement, or the markets don't care," he said.

David Steinberg, managing partner of DLS Capital outside Chicago, said that it was only natural for the market to pause after its run-up in recent weeks. He said that he did not think that the cliff would be a "grand event" for the market. □



Trader Frederick Reimer, right, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Stocks sank most of the day Thursday over budget uncertainty, but recovered some of the loss after a late report that President Obama and GOP leaders would meet.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

dex dropped 21.65 points to 2,992.16.

The decline in stocks came despite the fourth straight weekly drop in applications for unemployment benefits. Applications fell 29,000 last week to 343,000, the second-lowest this year, the Labor Department reported.

Energy, health care and technology stocks fell the most, and consumer sta-

the week.

Drugstore operator CVS Caremark climbed 96 cents, or 2 percent, to \$48.50 after issuing a profit prediction for next year that was ahead of Wall Street expectations. The company also raised its dividend.

On Wednesday, the Dow declined for the first day in five. Stocks rallied in the afternoon after the Federal Reserve tied its pledge of

US jobless aid drops for fourth week

**C. S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell sharply for a fourth straight week, a sign that the job market may be improving.

The Labor Department said Thursday that weekly applications for unemployment benefits fell 29,000 last week to a seasonally adjusted 343,000, the lowest in two months. It is the second-lowest total this year.

Applications are a proxy for layoffs, so the drop indicates that companies are cutting fewer jobs. But employers also need to step up hiring to rapidly push down the unemployment rate. The drop suggests that companies aren't laying off workers in advance of the "fiscal cliff," the package of tax increases and spending cuts set to take effect early next year.

"Worries about the fiscal cliff are not translating into any significant weakening in the labor market yet," said Jim O'Sullivan, an economist at High Frequency Economics. "Today's reading suggests net improvement, although it is just one week."

Applications spiked five weeks ago because of Superstorm Sandy. □

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S&P putting UK on watch over ratings

STEPHEN CASTLE

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LONDON — The likely loss of Britain's faultless sovereign credit rating assumed an air of inevitability Thursday when Standard & Poor's fell into line with its two main rivals and put the country on negative watch.

The move came after the chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, announced last week that the government had missed one of its debt-cutting goals and would have to extend austerity policies into 2018, a year longer than previously promised. Early in the financial crisis, Osborne highlighted Britain's AAA credit rating as an endorsement of his economic policy.

More recently he has played down its significance, apparently in anticipation of bad news. Last week Osborne told the BBC that "the credit rating is one of a number of ways in which people look at countries," adding that "one of the things we've been able to do as a government is keep those rates very, very low because the world has confidence in us."

In a statement Thursday, S&P said it now expected Britain's government debt as a percentage of gross domestic product to continue to rise in 2015 before declining again, adding, "Future employment or growth shocks could pressure government finances further."

"We are therefore revising our outlook on the unsolicited long-term ratings on the United Kingdom to negative, from stable, reflecting our view of a one-in-three chance that we could lower the ratings if the U.K.'s economic and fiscal performances weaken beyond our current expectations," the agency added.

The statement brought S&P into line with the two other big ratings agencies, Fitch and Moody's. □

Yahoo adds 1 director; 2 board members exit

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Yahoo is adding a new director and parting ways with two other board members in the latest shake-up of the Internet company's hierarchy. PayPal co-founder Max Levchin joins Yahoo's board while Intuit Inc. CEO Brad Smith and Weather Channel CEO David Kenny step down.

The changes announced Thursday pare Yahoo's board to 11 directors. All but one of them, former accounting executive Sue James, have joined Yahoo's board this year. The overhaul is part of an effort to bring in new ideas as Yahoo Inc. tries to revive revenue growth and snap itself out of a malaise that has left its stock price well below where it stood five years ago.

Yahoo hired former Google Inc. executive Marissa Mayer five months ago to orchestrate the turnaround effort. She joined Yahoo's board when she

was named the company's CEO in July.

Levchin, 37, is the first new director to be named since Mayer's arrival. After getting rich from PayPal's \$1.5 billion sale to eBay Inc. a decade ago, Levchin started a photo-sharing service called Slide. He added to his wealth by selling Slide to Google for \$179 million two years ago.

Levchin stayed at Google briefly before leaving the Internet search leader to start a data-mining company called HVF.

"Max is someone I've admired throughout my career for his phenomenal sense for great products and keen focus on user experiences," Mayer, also 37, said in a statement. Levchin is the fourth director recruited by Daniel Loeb, who manages a hedge fund that ranks among Yahoo's largest shareholders.

Loeb uncovered a misstatement on the official biography of Yahoo's then-CEO, Scott Thompson, that led to Thompson's departure earlier this

year after just four months on the job. After Thompson had rejected Loeb's attempts to gain a seat on Yahoo's board, the company relented and agreed to allow him to nominate up to four people.

Besides himself, Loeb picked turnaround specialist Harry Wilson and former MTV executive Michael Wolf before adding Levchin to the list. Yahoo, which is based in Sunnyvale, California, said Smith and Kenny are stepping down to focus on running their own companies.

Smith joined Yahoo's board in 2010 and Kenney followed in 2011. Both men participated in the complicated negotiations that culminated three months ago in Yahoo selling half its stake in rapidly growing Chinese Internet company Alibaba Group Holdings, generating a windfall of \$7.6 billion, before taxes.

Kenny also was once considered to be a candidate to be Yahoo's CEO after the company fired Carol Bartz as its leader in September 2011. □

GM gives its pickups a needed makeover



The 2014 Chevrolet Silverado debuts in Pontiac, Mich., Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. The models roll into a market where truck sales are growing after a five-year slump. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya)

TOM KRISHER

AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — General Motors is giving its big pickups a much-needed makeover.

The company unveiled new versions of its top-selling Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra on Thursday, aiming to get them to showrooms by late spring or early summer.

The timing is good. Truck sales are growing after a five-year slump. And the new pickups replace models that were last revamped in 2007. That means GM dealers are offering pickups that are dated compared with newer Fords and Chryslers — and it is hurting sales. GM says the 2014 trucks should put the company back in front. The trucks

look a little more aggressive and aerodynamic. They will have quieter cabs, and updated steering, suspensions and brakes, GM says.

Gas mileage and pricing of the trucks was not released, although GM North American President Mark Reuss says customers will be surprised by the prices. He says the trucks are 200 pounds (90 kilograms) lighter than

Ford and Chrysler competitors, which will help boost gas mileage.

The trucks should close the gap with Ford's F-150 and Chrysler's revamped Ram, especially if the engines are more powerful and efficient, says Jeff Schuster, senior vice president of forecasting for LMC Automotive, a Detroit-area industry consulting firm.

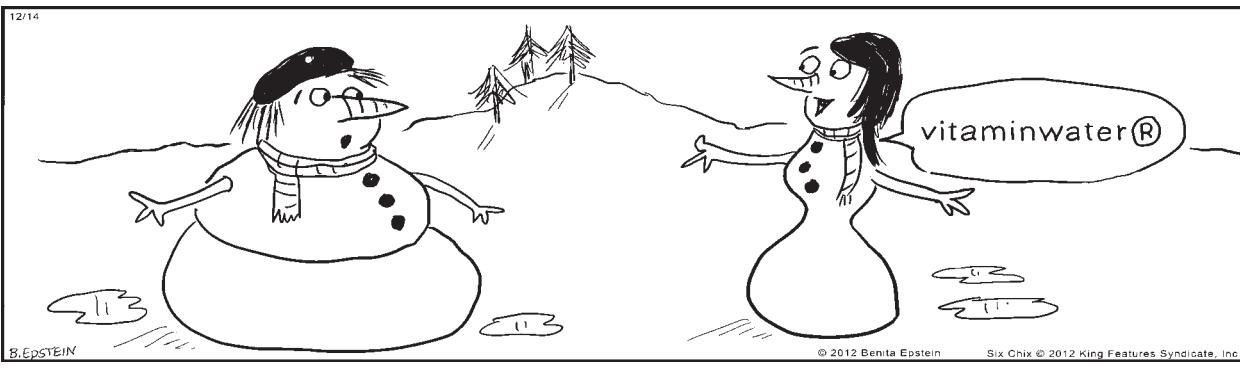
"The focus that they really put into these trucks, I think, gets them there," he said. He was impressed by GM's attention to detail. For example, there's a step built into the rear bumper to gain access to the bed. And the doors fit into recesses in the body to make the trucks quieter.

GM offers three revamped engines: a 262-horsepower, 4.3-liter V-6 that GM says can tow a substantial trailer; a 325-horsepower, 5.3-liter V-8 that will get better mileage than the 22 mpg (10.7 liters per 100 kms) the current model gets on highways; and a 6.2-liter V-8 with 376 horsepower. GM, which has been building Chevy trucks for 95 years, says the new models should hit the market at a good time. □

Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

6	2	3	7											
	4		9											
8	5			2										
		5			4									
		6				3								
2							9	4						
			7					8						
			5	1	6	3								

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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7	9	8	4	2	1	3	6	5						
2	1	5	3	6	9	8	4	7						
4	3	6	5	8	7	2	9	1						
3	6	2	7	9	4	5	1	8						
8	5	9	1	3	2	4	7	6						
1	4	7	6	5	8	9	2	3						
5	2	3	9	7	6	1	8	4						
9	7	1	8	4	5	6	3	2						
6	8	4	2	1	3	7	5	9						

Yesterday's puzzle answer

12/14

ACROSS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 "Carmen" or "La Traviata"													
6 Night twinkler													
10 Con game													
14 Was crazy about													
15 Craving													
16 Lacking vivid colors													
17 Great fear													
18 Lunchtime													
19 Leave out													
20 Police officer's superior													
22 Per person													
24 Mayberry's sheriff													
25 Not as large													
26 African nation													
29 Make a ___; get emotional in public													
30 Actor McKellen													
31 "...for ___ waves of grain..."													
33 Build													
37 Stench													
39 Rescued													
41 Store event													
42 Religious belief													
44 Stitched													
46 Have regrets													
47 Home of logs													
49 ___ up; makes untidy													
51 Put in danger													
52 Horse's gait													
53 Leave suddenly													
55 Perches													
56 Stark raving mad													
57 Overindulgent parents													
58 Black-and-white birds													
59 Desert beast													
60 Heroic tale													
61 Air freshener brand													
62 Sequoia or oak													
63 Rooster													
64 Cattle group													
65 Stop													
66 Classic gifts for Father's Day													
67 Lock of hair													
68 Helpful hint													
69 Golfing pegs													
70 Breaks in kids' school days													
71 Jabbed													
72 Supports													
73 Small rodents													
74 Give a hoot													
75 Up; tallies													
76 Not as much													
77 Luau dish													

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

T	A	M	E	L	E	A	D	S	D	R	A	B	
A	S	A	N	U	L	T	R	A	R	E	N	O	
F	E	U	D	C	L	E	A	N	E	A	T	S	
T	A	I	L	O	R	S	M	E	A	S	L	E	
E	W	E	H	A	R	M	S	E	H	A	R	M	
A	M	U	S	E	G	A	B	E	A	C	H	E	
M	A	N	S	W	E	J	E	R	S	E	E	S	
D	E	L	I	V	E	C	A	P	T	H	O	S	
T	A	I	L	O	R	S	M	E	A	S	L	E	
S	A	I	L	O	R	S	M	E	A	S	L	E	
A	T	E	N	E	R	E	T	R	U	B	E	A	
T	E	N	E	R	E	R	E	T	R	U	B	E	
A	L	T	E	R	D	P	E	G	A	S	E	A	
F	O	U	R	S	C	O	O	P	C	O	P	E	
A	N	N	A	T	A	B							

German real estate booms as consumers seek security

DAVID RISING
Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Buying a home in Berlin is widely viewed as one of the safest investments a German, or any European, can make. That is why some real-estate experts are worried the market could get overheated.

Home prices in Germany's largest cities are booming. Building permits and home ownership rates are climbing fast. And the percentage of foreigners snapping up second homes in Germany is on the rise.

In Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich and four other red-hot markets, prices surged an average of 10 percent during the first half of 2012, according to Deutsche Bank. German central Bundesbank data show increases of 9 percent in 2011 in the country's urban centers and 5 percent the year before. Things may not be as frothy as Las Vegas, Phoenix or Miami during the peak of the U.S. boom, but it is bordering on breathtaking in a country where home prices declined or stagnated from 2000 through 2009.

The rate at which home prices are rising in Germany is not sustainable in the long term, says Steffen Sebastian, the chairman of the University of Regensburg's Institute for Real Estate Finance. However, Sebastian adds, there won't be a repeat in Germany of the Spanish and Irish financial crises, where real estate markets disintegrated and economies were brought close to collapse after overextended homebuyers and banks were hit by the Great Recession of 2008.

"When we talk about bubbles of course the market in Germany cannot be compared with the U.S. market."



Estate agent Tomas Nyisztor, center, talks to Italian couple Andrea Bricconi, left, Claudia Mosca, right, and their boys prior to an inspection in an empty apartment at the district Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin.

(AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

ket," he said. "Usually the other bubbles are driven by excessive use of leverage by borrowing money but in Germany borrowing was always quite heavily regulated and this is not going to change."

The recent fervor for German real estate is a consequence of the European debt crisis. To stimulate economic growth, the European Central Bank has driven its benchmark rate to a record low of 0.75 percent and that is helping to drive down consumer borrowing costs across Europe.

As mortgage rates fall in Germany, many are jumping at the opportunity to finance home purchases, pushing Germany's home ownership rate to 53 percent. That's up 10 percentage points from a decade ago, according to figures from LBS, Germany's largest mortgage lender. Because of the ECB's interest rate policies, some Germans are fearful that borrowing and spending could rise too quickly, pushing up the prices of everyday goods to unhealthy levels. □

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585-4710

584-7000

584-5000

911

100

115

582-1108

11141

527-4000

Emergency Numbers



Emergency	911
Police	100
Fire Dept.	115
Fire Dept. II	582-1108
Police Tipline	11141
Hospital	527-4000

911

100

115

582-1108

11141

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Oranjestad

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Police	582-4000

582-1234

582-4000

San Nicolas

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Police Station	584-5000
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197976a

Oldest galaxy in universe now judged even older

ALICIA CHANG

AP Science Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A galaxy once considered the oldest has reclaimed its title, scientists reported Wednesday.

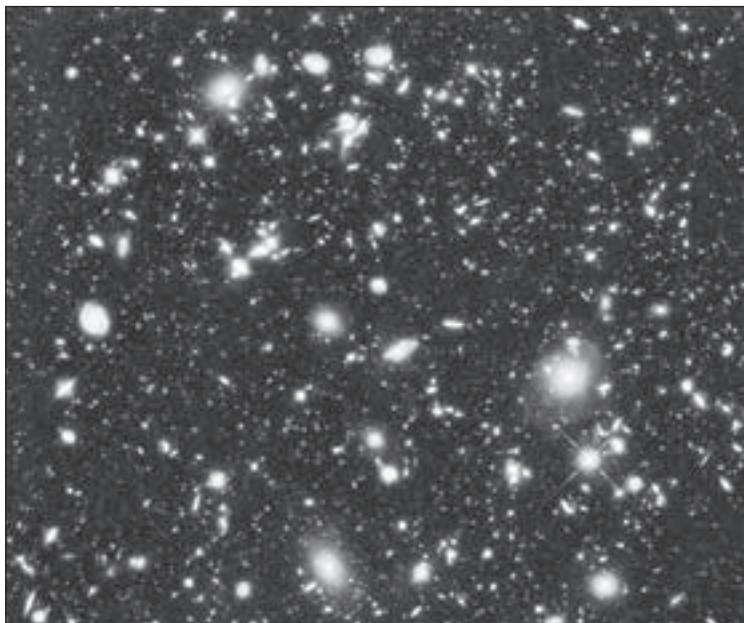
Poring through Hubble Space Telescope photos, the team recalculated the galaxy's age and determined it is actually 13.3 billion years old — not a mere 13.2 billion.

The dim galaxy filled with blue stars was first noticed last year by a different group of researchers, who also used the workhorse telescope to make the previous age estimate. It reigned as the most ancient galaxy observed until last month when it was knocked off its perch by another distant galaxy.

Now it's back on top after the team used a longer exposure time to get a clearer view of the earliest and far-off galaxies. Seeing the most distant galaxies is like looking back in time and this one existed when the universe was in its infancy — about 380 million years old.

Besides refining the galaxy's age, they found half a dozen new early ones.

"People have found one object here and there," but never so many early



In this image provided by NASA and taken by the Hubble Space Telescope shows previously unseen early galaxies including the oldest one at 13.3 billion years old.

Associated Press

galaxies, said Richard Ellis, an astronomer at the California Institute of Technology who led the new work. The findings will be published in the Astrophysical Journal Letters.

Scientists are excited about the bounty of early galaxies, which should help refine theories about the formation of the first stars and galaxies. Astronomers think galaxies started appearing after the Big Bang, the explosion believed to have created the universe 13.7 billion years ago. Our Milky Way — one of hundreds of billions of galaxies — formed about 10 billion years ago.

"We want to know our cos-

mic roots, how things got started and the origins of the galaxies that we see nowadays," said Harvard University astrophysicist Avi Loeb, who had no role in the latest research.

Launched in 1990, Hubble has consistently peered back in time to reveal ancient and distant objects. The farther away something is, the longer it takes for its light to travel to Earth, which scientists use to estimate its age.

As far back as Hubble can see, it still can't capture the earliest galaxies. That job is left to its more powerful successor, the James Webb Telescope, to be launched in 2018. □

Alan Alda asks scientists to explain: What's time?

FRANK ELTMAN

Associated Press

MINEOLA, New York (AP) — Professor Alan Alda has a homework assignment for scientists. Yes, that Alan Alda.

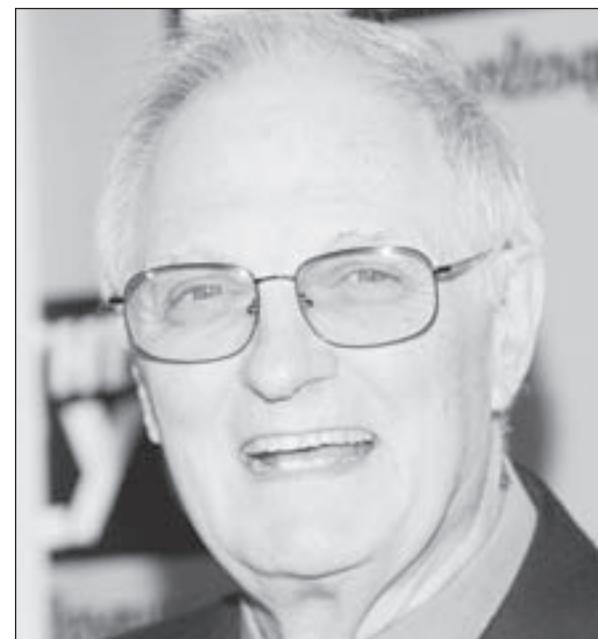
The actor known for his Emmy-Award-winning work on the TV show "MASH," is a founder of the Center for Communicating Science at Stony Brook University on eastern Long Island.

Alda tells The Associated Press the center is sponsoring a contest asking scientists to explain, in terms a sixth-grader could understand: "What is time?"

Well-known for his affinity for science, Alda is the longtime host of the Public Broadcasting Service's "Scientific American Frontiers."

He says society must have a better understanding of science.

This is the contest's second year. Last year, scientists were asked to explain what a flame is. Alda says he was 11 years old when he asked a teacher that question and got an answer he didn't understand. □



In this April 19, 2012, file photo, actor Alan Alda attends a screening at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Associated Press

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This June 18, 2010 file photo shows Carole King performing on the NBC "Today" television program in New York. King is the first woman to win the Library of Congress' Gershwin Prize for Popular Song for her five decades of songwriting.

Associated Press

U.S. library to honor Carole King with music prize

BRETT ZONGKER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Carole King has a friend in the U.S. Library of Congress. She is the first woman to win the library's Gershwin Prize for Popular Song.

In her five decades of songwriting, King's hits have included "You've Got a Friend," "So Far Away" and "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman." The library said Thursday that King will be the fifth person to receive the prize. Prior recipients include Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney. Librarian of Congress James Billington says King's work has been recorded by many artists to communicate universal human emotions like love, joy and pain.

King will receive the prize in the spring and says in a statement that she looks forward to performing in Washington. Honorees are typically saluted at the White House. □

McCartney musical guest on 'Saturday Night Live'

FRAZIER MOORE

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Saturday Night Live" is welcoming two prominent up-and-comers to this week's special Christmas show.

Guest hosting will be a brilliant Canadian-born comic, Martin Short.

The musical guest? Breakout singer-songwriter Paul McCartney.

"I think he's from Europe," Short said, tongue-in-cheek, at the mention of McCartney's name. "People say he's got potential!" Short, now 62, was an "SNL" regular during the 1984-85 season before returning as guest host in 1986 and 1996 and making cameo appearances in 2005 and



This image released by Starpix shows Paul McCartney at the 12-12-12 The Concert for Sandy Relief at Madison Square Garden in New York on Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2012. Proceeds from the show will be distributed through the Robin Hood Foundation. Associated Press

2006.

It's the fourth appearance as musical guest for McCartney, 70. □

Documents: Prisoner plotted to kill Justin Bieber

RUSSELL CONTRERAS

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, New Mexico (AP) — An imprisoned man whose infatuation with Justin Bieber included a tattoo of the pop star on his leg has told investigators he hatched a plot to kill the singer, according to documents recently filed in a New Mexico court.

An affidavit filed in Las Cruces said Dana Martin told investigators he persuaded a man he met in prison and the man's nephew to kill Bieber, along with Bieber's personal bodyguard and two others not connected to the pop star.

The plot contained several gruesome details. Investigators say the plotters wanted to castrate two of the victims with hedge clippers before traveling to New York City to find Bieber. The targets of the castration plot were not connected to Bieber, authorities say, and it doesn't appear that the pop singer was ever in immediate danger of falling victim to the plot.

Martin, a Vermont man who is serving two life sentences for the 2000 killing of a 15-year-old girl, said he was angry at Bieber because he didn't respond to any of his letters. "This perceived slight made Mr. Martin upset and that, coupled with Mr. Martin's perception of being a 'nobody' in prison, led him to begin plotting the kidnap and murder of Victim 3," court documents said.

The documents identified Victim 3 as "J.B.," which New Mexico State Police spokesman Lt. Robert McDonald later confirmed was Justin Bieber.

Martin told investigators that Mark Staake and Tanner D. Ruane headed from New Mexico to the East Coast, planning to be near a Bieber concert scheduled in New York City after killing and castrating two others. But authorities say they missed a turn and crossed into Canada from Vermont. Staake was ar-



In this 2006 photo released by the Leon County Sheriff's Office, Dana Martin is seen. In this photo released by the New York State Police, Tanner Ruane is seen.

Associated Press



rested on an outstanding warrant. Ruane was arrested later.

Court documents say Martin told investigators that Bieber was the "ultimate target." No one was killed in the alleged elaborate plot.

New York State Police said Thursday that troopers recovered tools and documents associated with the conspiracy while during a search warrant on Ruane's vehicle. Among the items found by troopers were a "hand-written drawing of a depiction of Justin Bieber" and documents about the intended victims in Vermont.

Staake, 41, of Albuquerque, has been charged with two counts each of conspiracy to commit first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit aggravated battery with a deadly weapon in connection

to the plan.

Ruane, 23, Staake's nephew, also is facing multiple charges related to the plot. Clinton Norris, of the New Mexico State Police investigations bureau in Las Cruces, said in an affidavit that Martin instructed the suspects to strangle the two first intended targets with paisley neckties, the same kind used in his 2000 murder case. The documents do not give details on how they were to kill Bieber.

McDonald declined to say if any of the murder charges are linked to Bieber. "That is part of the ongoing investigation," he said.

Bieber's management issued a statement that said, "we take every precaution to protect and insure the safety of Justin and his fans."

It was not immediately known if the suspects had lawyers. □



Director Pedro Almodóvar arrives for a tribute evening for him on behalf of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), at the Curzon Soho cinema in central London, Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012, celebrating the work of the Oscar-winning filmmaker.

Associated Press

Oscars Academy honors Almodóvar in London

JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Iconoclastic director Pedro Almodóvar was hailed by Hollywood on Thursday at an Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences retrospective in London. The Spanish filmmaker received tributes from colleagues and admirers, including fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier, screenwriter Peter Morgan and fellow director Stephen Frears — who praised Almodóvar's "transgressive, inventive" spirit.

Quentin Tarantino, in a video message, said Almodóvar was the contemporary director he admired most. Almodóvar is part of a creative generation that emerged after Spain ended decades of dictatorship in the late 1970s. His quirky and sometimes outrageous films helped launch the careers of Penelope Cruz, Antonio Banderas and Javier Bardem. He found international success with "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" in 1988.

Almodóvar's 1999 movie "All About My Mother" won the Academy Award for best foreign language film, and he took the best original screenplay Oscar in 2002 for "Talk to Her." His films — up to last year's "The Skin I Live In" — remain a heady mix of comedy,

tragedy, melodrama, music and more.

Almodóvar said he was honored to receive recognition from Hollywood — if a bit surprised.

"My way of creating and producing and directing is so different from the big companies," he said. "I represent all the independent filmmakers who deserve recognition."

"For reasons I don't understand, (Hollywood) made an exception for me. Maybe it's because in my films a lot of things happen, and that entertains them." □

New-found tale could be Hans Christian Andersen's



A newly found manuscript of a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen which has been located in Odense, pictured in the State Archives in Copenhagen, Denmark Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2012. The story of 'The Tallow Candle' might have been written about 1823, when he was 18 years old.

Associated Press

JAN M. OLSEN
Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP)

— For years, the somber fairy tale about a lonely candle that wanted to be lit dwelt in oblivion at the bottom of a box in Denmark's National Archives. Its recent discovery has sent ripples through the literary world because it is believed to be one of the first tales ever written by Hans Christian Andersen. The famed Dane wrote

nearly 160 fairy tales in his life, including classics such as "The Ugly Duckling" and "The Little Mermaid." The tale of the candle may have been written when he was still a teen, experts say. Retired historian Esben Brage said Thursday that he found the six-page text on Oct. 4 while searching through archive boxes that had belonged to wealthy families from Andersen's hometown of Odense in central Denmark.

The handwritten copy of the tale, titled "Tallow Candle," and dedicated to a vicar's widow named Bunkeflok who had lived across from Andersen's home, had been left seemingly untouched at the bottom of one of the boxes.

"I was ecstatic," Brage said. "I had never imagined this." The short story tells the tale of how a tallow candle seeks help from a tinder box to be able to ignite itself. A senior curator at the Hans Christian Andersen Museum in Odense said the work is likely one of the author's earliest, written at the age of 18 — seven years before his official debut in 1830.

"I often get calls about stuff thought to have been of Andersen's hand. Most of the time, it is not. This time I was thrilled," Ejnar Stig Askgaard told The Associated Press. "This is a very early attempt at prose by Andersen, who was then 18."

Askgaard said Andersen regularly visited the Bunkeflok widow, reading to her and borrowing books from her, even after he moved to Copenhagen to attend university.

"The text is not at the level of the more mature fairy tales that we know from Andersen's later writing," Askgaard said. □

George Wendt joins 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' team

MARK KENNEDY

AP Drama Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Former "Cheers" star George Wendt is heading to the other side of the bar — he'll play a bartender when "Breakfast at Tiffany's" hits Broadway next year.

The play, a return to the story by Truman Capote, will star Emilia Clarke of HBO's "Game of Thrones" as Holly Golightly in the role Audrey Hepburn made famous in the 1961 movie.

Performances at the Cort Theatre begin March 4. Wendt, former "Cheers" dude-at-the-bar Norm Peterson, will play a bartender who knows both Golightly



This Oct. 20, 2009 file photo shows actor George Wendt posing for a portrait in New York.

Associated Press

and a young smitten writer. Wendt was last on Broadway as Santa in a musical made from the Will Ferrell film "Elf." He also slipped on

Edna Turnblad's housecoat in Broadway's "Hairspray" in 2007 and was in the Tony Award-winning play "Art" in New York and London. □

Robots And Robber Barons



PAUL KRUGMAN
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The American economy is still, by most measures, deeply depressed. But corporate profits are at a record high. How is that possible? It's simple: Profits have surged as a share of national income, while wages and other labor compensation are down. The pie isn't growing the way it should – but capital is doing fine by grabbing an ever-larger slice, at labor's expense.

Wait – are we really back to talking about capital versus labor? Isn't that an old-fashioned, almost Marxist sort of discussion, out of date in our modern information economy? Well, that's what many people thought; for the past generation discussions of inequality have focused overwhelmingly not on capital versus labor but on distributional issues between workers, either on the gap between more- and less-educated workers or on the soaring incomes of a handful of superstars in finance and other fields. But that may be yesterday's story.

More specifically, while it's true that the finance guys are still making out like bandits – in part because, as we now know, some of them actually are bandits – the wage gap between workers with a college education and those without, which grew a lot in the 1980s and early 1990s, hasn't changed much since then. Indeed, recent college graduates had stagnant incomes even before the financial crisis struck. Increasingly, profits have been rising at the expense of workers in general, including workers with the skills that were supposed to lead to success in today's economy.

Why is this happening? As best as I can tell, there are two plausible explanations, both of which could be true to some extent. One is that technology has taken a turn that places labor at a disadvantage; the other is that we're looking at the effects of a sharp increase in monopoly power. Think of these two stories as emphasizing robots on one side, robber barons on the other. About the robots: There's no question that in some high-profile industries, technology is displacing workers of all, or almost all, kinds. For example, one of the reasons some high-technology manufacturing has lately been moving back to the United States is that these days the

most valuable piece of a computer, the motherboard, is basically made by robots, so cheap Asian labor is no longer a reason to produce them abroad.

In a recent book, "Race Against the Machine," MIT's Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee argue that similar stories are playing out in many fields, including services like translation and legal research. What's striking about their examples is that many of the jobs being displaced are high-skill and high-wage; the downside of technology isn't limited to menial workers.

Still, can innovation and progress really hurt large numbers of workers, maybe even workers in general? I often encounter assertions that this can't happen. But the truth is that it can, and serious economists have been aware of this possibility for almost two centuries. The early-19th-century economist David Ricardo is best known for the theory of comparative advantage, which makes the case for free trade; but the same 1817 book in which he presented that theory also included a chapter on how the new, capital-intensive technologies of the Industrial Revolution could actually make workers worse off, at least for a while – which modern scholarship suggests may indeed have happened for several decades.

What about robber barons? We don't talk much about monopoly power these days; antitrust enforcement largely collapsed during the Reagan years and has never really recovered. Yet Barry Lynn and Phillip Longman of the New America Foundation argue, persuasively in my view, that increasing business concentration could be an important factor in stagnating demand for labor, as corporations use their growing monopoly power to raise prices without passing the gains on to their employees.

I don't know how much of the devaluation of labor either technology or monopoly explains, in part because there has been so little discussion of what's going on. I think it's fair to say that the shift of income from labor to capital has not yet made it into our national discourse.

Yet that shift is happening – and it has major implications. For example, there is a big, lavishly financed push to reduce corporate tax rates; is this really what we want to be doing at a time when profits are surging at workers' expense? Or what about the push to reduce or eliminate inheritance taxes; if we're moving back to a world in which financial capital, not skill or education, determines income, do we really want to make it even easier to inherit wealth?

As I said, this is a discussion that has barely begun – but it's time to get started, before the robots and the robber barons turn our society into something unrecognizable. □



The Full Israeli Experience



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
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TEL AVIV, Israel – These were the main regional news headlines in The Jerusalem Post on Wednesday: "Home Front Command simulates missile strike during drill." Egypt's President "Morsi opts for safety as police battle protesters." In Syria, "Fight spills over into Lebanon." "Darkness at noon for fearful Damascus residents." "Tunisian Islamists, leftists clash after jobs protests." "NATO warns Syria not to use chemical weapons." And my personal favorite: "'Come back and bring a lot of people with you' – Tourism Ministry offers tour operators the full Israeli experience."

Ah, yes, "the full Israeli experience."

The full Israeli experience today is a living political science experiment. How does a country deal with failed or failing state authority on four of its borders – Gaza, South Lebanon, Syria and the Sinai Desert of Egypt – each of which is now crawling with non-state actors nested among civilians and armed with rockets. How should Israel and its friends think about this "Israeli experience" and connect it with the ever-present question of Israeli-Palestinian peace?

For starters, if you want to run for office in Israel, or be taken seriously here as either a journalist or a diplomat, there is an unspoken question in the mind of virtually every Israeli that you need to answer correctly: "Do you understand what neighborhood I'm living in?" If Israelis smell that you don't, their ears will close to you.

It is one reason the Europeans in general, and the European left in particular, have so little influence here.

The central political divide in Israel today is over the follow-up to this core question: If you appreciate that Israel lives in a neighborhood where there is no mercy for the weak, how should we expect Israel to act?

There are two major schools of thought here. One, led by Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu, comprises the "Ideological Hawks," who, to the question, "Do you know what neighborhood I am living in?" tell Israelis and the world, "It is so much worse than you think!" Bibi goes out of his way to highlight every possible threat to Israel and essentially makes the case that nothing Israel does has ever or can ever alter the immutable Arab hatred of the Jewish state or the Hobbesian character of the neighborhood. Netanyahu is not without supporting evidence. Israel withdraws from both South Lebanon and Gaza and still gets hit with rockets. But this group is called the "ideological" hawks because most of them also advocate Israel's retaining permanent control of the West Bank and Jerusalem for religious-nationalist reasons. So it's impossible to know where their strategic logic for holding territory stops and their religious-nationalist dreams start – and that muddies their case with the world.

The other major school of thought here, call it the "Yitzhak Rabin school," was best described by the writer Leon Wieseltier as the "bastards for peace."

Rabin, the former Israeli prime minister and war hero, started exactly where Bibi did: This is a dangerous neighborhood, and a Jewish state is not welcome here. But Rabin didn't stop there. He also believed that Israel was very powerful and, therefore, should judiciously use its strength to try to avoid becoming a garrison state, fated to rule over several million Palestinians forever. Israel's "bastards for peace" believe that it's

incumbent on every Israeli leader to test, test and test again – using every ounce of Israeli creativity – to see if Israel can find a Palestinian partner for a secure peace so that it is not forever fighting an inside war and an outside war. At best, the Palestinians might surprise them. At worst, Israel would have the moral high ground in a permanent struggle.

Today, alas, not only is the Israeli peace camp dead, but the most effective Israeli "bastard for peace," Defense Minister Ehud Barak, is retiring. As I sat with Barak in his office the other day, he shared with me his parting advice to Israel's next and sure-to-be-far-right government.

Huge political forces, with deep roots, are now playing out around Israel, particularly the rise of political Islam, Barak said. "We have to learn to accept it and see both sides of it and try to make it better. I am worried about our tendency to adopt a fatalistic, pessimistic perception of history. Because, once you adopt it, you are relieved from the responsibility to see the better aspects and seize the opportunities" when they arise.

If Israel just assumes that it's only a matter of time before the moderate Palestinian leaders in the West Bank fall and Hamas takes over, "why try anything?" added Barak. "And, therefore, you lose sight of the opportunities and the will to seize opportunities. ... I know that you can't say when leaders raise this kind of pessimism that it is all just invented. It is not all invented, and you would be stupid if you did not look ((at it)) with open eyes. But it is a major risk that you will not notice that you become enslaved by this pessimism in a way that will paralyze you from understanding that you can shape it. The world is full of risks, but that doesn't mean that you don't have a responsibility to do something about it – within your limits and the limits of realism – and avoid self-fulfilling prophecies that are extremely dangerous here." □

Toys for Tots

Christmas
is the season
of sharing and giving.

As has been the custom of Aruba Today and Bon Dia Aruba since 2003, we are again collecting toys, books, clothing for boys and girls, non-perishable food, etc. for Casa Cuna Children's House, Imeldahof and The Food Bank of Aruba.

Let's make this a Merry and Joyful Christmas for everyone on our island, as it's an opportunity for us all to show solidarity and our love to others. You too can be part of this program by bringing your gift to our office located at the Weststraat #22 in Oranjestad.

Financial contributions are also possible.
Help us make this Christmas a very special one for our children and families all in Aruba.
Toys for Tots thanks each and everyone of you for helping us helping others.

THANK YOU!!

*Thank
You*

BON DIA  Aruba